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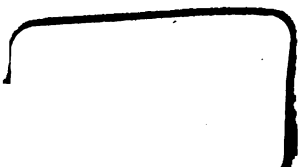
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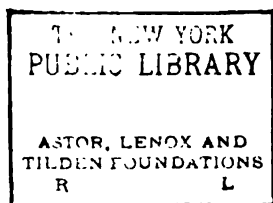
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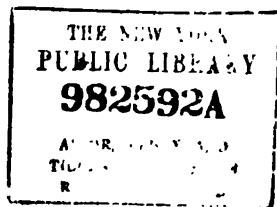
DEARLOVE

THE HISTORY OF HER
SUMMER'S MAKEBELIEVE

BY
FRANCES CAMPBELL

NEW YORK
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To
DOCTOR F. J. FURNIVALL, M.A., PH.D., D.LIT.,
Founder of the Shakespear and Browning Societies.

MY DEAR DOCTOR FURNIVALL,—

Since I really began this story to please you, the first, kindest, and truest friend my work has made for me, it is meet that it should be offered to you, being as it is, in some sort, a chronicle of the doings and sayings of a certain little friend of your own.

With great love and respect,

Yours affectionately,

FRANCES CAMPBELL.

ST. COLUMB MINOR,
CORNWALL, 1906.

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CHAPTER I

DEARLOVE'S PEOPLE, AND WHAT SHE WAS TO THEM

IT was the last day of July, hottest day of the hottest month London had ever known. A month that had spent itself with golden prodigality, and was now lingering out the remnant of its glorious wealth on empty squares and deserted parks, with a generosity that made one wonder if it were trying to atone for a winter that had lain in the lap of June, and a spring hardly as yet forgotten or forgiven—wet, cold, and dreary. All the world that had not flown was flying. Silence had already succeeded to the bustle and importance of the season. The blinds were down in Belgravia ; Park Lane was enshrouded in holland ; and the coachmen were taking their families out for airings. Everybody who could go had gone ; town was desolate because of the intolerable heat. But here and there, in the quiet and more aristocratic squares, stood a house whose striped awnings and little

curving balconies, filled with wilting flowers, showed a master or mistress still at home. And at the very end of one of the quietest and most aristocratic stood one whose door, at the top of its magnificent ascent of white marble steps, was wide open and expectant beneath its fine portico, a tall, dignified old house, whose whole aspect was manifestly one of waiting.

That was the town house of the Earl of Amherst, and the Earl himself, his son Lord Inverona, and Nesta, Lord Inverona's tall fair young wife, with Lady Margaret Gordon, the Earl's only daughter, were assembled in one of the drawing-rooms facing the square, waiting for Philomena, who was the Earl's grand-daughter, and Lady Margaret's only child.

The only child in all the family, and if she had her own way, and more indulgences of one kind and another than usually fall to the lot of children, you will understand it was because they were very tender and loving people among whom her lines were cast, and they had suffered greatly, and lost much; and in the time of their greatest trouble she had, though unconsciously, being but a child, and without much understanding of it, taken up a corner of the cloud that covered them all, and showed them light. One little girl in a family of grown up men and women is

fairly certain to be spoilt. Yet I could not say that Philomena was exactly that. She was a very odd little girl, full of queer and unexpected moods, but usually happy ones, and she had a way of shedding happiness around her that made for her own. She was not old-fashioned or yet precocious, yet I never knew any child or grown person with so much wisdom, or such craft in the application of it. She dearly loved her own way, but she would have been quite philosophical had it been denied her, and she enjoyed every second of her life, from waking time till her big grey-blue eyes closed in the middle of the hymn with which she sang herself to sleep. She was devoutly pious, and at times singularly and exasperatingly naughty. For the rest she will tell you herself what she is.

The Earl of Amherst had one other son beside Lord Inverona. That son had been a soldier like his brother Christopher, and had gone out some thirteen years before this story begins, to India with his regiment. And there he had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared—gone out as completely as if he had attained Nirvana, and in spite of all searchings no faintest trace of him had ever been found.

There were no debts, no scandal, no impending disgrace. He was an ardent lover of his profes-

sion, and a general favourite, leaving a clean and honourable record behind him. Drogo Amherst went out lamented and regretted by all who knew him.

His mother died of longing and sorrow ; in the hearts of father, brother, and sister he left a passionate disbelief in his death. One and all they were assured that some day Drogo would be found. In the meantime they sought him unceasingly, the world over. And the reason of this belief in his restoration was this : a friend of Drogo's had been badly wounded in a hill fight, and, thinking himself on the brink of the grave, had written a letter to Lord Amherst, telling him certain things he had been prevented by friendship for the lost friend from relating before.

Before the Lancer regiment to which they belonged had left London, Drogo had fallen passionately in love with a beautiful and gifted young Italian lady, who was about to go on the stage. She returned his affection, but feared to handicap her career by marrying a younger son whose family might resent her calling, and perhaps refuse to receive her, or, worse still, prevent her career.

The friend had reason to think that she eventually consented to a secret marriage—though he was not sure. But this he knew for absolute

fact: Drogo had gone to Calcutta the week before his disappearance to meet Marie Farnisi and they had been there together. That was all—no more. But, little as it was, it filled them all with hope. For some reason he had gone away; when he was ready, he would return.

Since the year of his disappearance, Marie Farnisi had become famous. She was the friend of a queen, the sought-after and flattered of all the world. Fortune bowed down and squandered all its choicest treasures at her feet. But she did not marry. Peerlessly beautiful, inscrutable, heartlessly cold—outside her marvellous art the woman had a heart of stone, a cruel, capricious disposition. Admiration, wealth, and position she had—but not love—she could not evoke it.

Lord Amherst had seen her once, and in his kind, gentle, old-fashioned way had made an appeal to her. Not another woman in the world could have resisted it, but Marie Farnisi merely smiled in her unfathomable, mysterious way, and denied all knowledge of what he sought to know. Yet she remembered a Drogo Amherst: it was a long time ago. She had forgotten all about him. Who was he?

But there was a something behind that subtle smile, in the glance of those long, brilliant, side-

long eyes, and in the ring of that wonderful voice of hers, that he remembered afterwards shudderingly.

A suggestion of terrible satisfaction : Marie Farnisi knew more than she was acknowledging, and her knowledge would have set him at rest one way or the other : and she was smilingly, ominously silent.

So far his searchings had ended in nothing. All the little clues, however hopeful, had ended in disappointment ; yet he was always setting out again on some fresh trail, some blind alley of discovery that led nowhere.

Drogo's last appearance among them had been at Margaret's wedding to Captain Keith Gordon, of the Highland Light Infantry. All the Amhersts were soldiers, and all their women married soldier men. When Margaret's husband and her brother went out to South Africa with their respective regiments, Margaret and her sister-in-law Nesta, Chris's wife, went to live with the Earl in the big London house. They had need between them to comfort and care for the suffering and bereaved old father, now faced with the terrible possibility of losing his eldest born.

Through that bad dark time the little grey-eyed, brown-haired child, who called him Ganpa, was the sole light and joy in that household. She

would give Ganpa no time at all to be unhappy in. Philomena needed society, so she thought, and the society she liked best was entirely outside the nursery, where one would naturally have supposed her to be. She tolerated and adored her mother and her pretty blonde Aunt Nesta, but with Ganpa she felt herself more on an equality. He was what she required, and consequently most of her time was spent in giving him an understanding of her. It would be difficult to say which of them most enjoyed the other's conversation. Enough for them all it was that she kept the house filled with childish laughter and mirth in a day of dread. When the whole nation stooped under a load of calamity, it was Philomena who lifted the dark burden off the three dwelling together in the big house in Portman Square, and saved them from the fear that was sapping away their lives.

Then the war ended. There were no more terrible pilgrimages to the War Office to scan the list of Death. Margaret's sorrow for the gay, handsome young soldier husband slain at Magersfontein had become a thing of custom. She grew reconciled to it in some measure, and in comforting others forgot the fierceness of her own bitter indignation against death. Philomena was left her; henceforth Philomena was all.

She began to take up the lines she had dropped when she married—music, and art, and painted some very pretty pictures—to her little daughter's great delight.

The war was over, and the tattered remnant of his regiment marched through London war-worn, ragged and scarred heroes, with their colonel at its head. Christopher was home again.

Philomena was taken to see her Uncle Chris march in at the head of his men, and she remembers better than anything else in her life the great surging crowd of people packed close in the Strand, with that little trickle of ragged soldier men in its midst, skin and bone most of them, wasted with enteric, starvation and hard marching, scarred and grim, with terrible eyes and leathern faces, the women and children clinging to them as they struggled along.

And at their head a big brown-faced man, head and shoulders above the crowd, smiling with a hungry kind of expression in his grey eyes. Nesta pointed to him in his much-mended khaki, and gave a little laugh that was half a sob.

"Chris!" she whispered. "My Chris! My Chris!"

Margaret had lifted her right hand as it lay on Philomena's neck at that, and pressed it to her lips. She had not till that moment fully

understood the silent depth of Nesta's love for her husband.

There was a block in the street immediately beneath their window, and suddenly an old woman broke through the crowd, threw her arms round the Colonel's neck and kissed him loudly, weeping the while.

"God bless you, Colonel dear!" she cried, "for the kind heart you've had to my boy Tim."

And with that she fainted forthwith in his arms. The big man carried her tenderly through the parted crowd to a chemist's shop, and, after some words, returned to his place. He turned as he went, and nodded smilingly to a white-faced private in the ranks behind him, and the private piped weakly, "Three cheers for big Chris!" Philomena will always remember those cheers—the mighty thunderous roaring from a thousand throats. You could not have heard heavy artillery in the tumultuous roarings of the multitude for "Big Chris."

And it was not alone for his kindly word, for his big heart and his observant eye, that Lord Inverona's men worshipped him, or that he became the idol of the mob. He was brave as a lion, and cautious as a snake—a leader who carried his men to victory. Chris had brought back merely the remnant of his famous old regiment,

but he had brought it back covered with wounds and glory, as it was wont to come.

Chris and his wife, Margaret and her child, did not make a great family party. Ganpa could not find it in his heart to part with any of them, so it was decided finally that they should go on living together—and obey Philomena.

They were all very happy together, in spite of Ganpa's sudden and unpremeditated departures here or there, as he thought his agents had come on some trace of the missing Drogo. When that came to pass, Ganpa immediately set out, and followed the clue till he arrived at its uttermost, and returned home always a little wiser and a little kinder and more silent than before.

But, much as they all adored Philomena, no one of them could say she was exactly a complaisant object of worship. She had too much interest in things in general to pose long as an idol. She was possessed by an eager and devouring interest in everything in life, which impelled her to inquire into it with such zeal and carefulness, that in the long run her mother considered it wise to send her to the Convent of Our Lady of Good Success to be educated, the household finding itself unequal to the demand on its energies. They found themselves very dull after her departure, being now so old-fashioned and

devoted to each other that they had ceased to care for any life outside their own circle. Neither Nesta nor Margaret played bridge, nor did they greatly love being seen in the great world to which they were born.

Margaret painted with increasing success. Nesta became more and more absorbed in a work she had taken up among orphan children. Their lives were busy, and lived to the uttermost. Chris had his profession, and was a keen soldier, delighting in it all, proud of the fame of his regiment, and rather ashamed of his own.

Ganpa had a busy time, too, because he never allowed a third person to come between him and the tenants on his large properties. Whatever his tenants' grievances or pleasures, they were brought to him in person, and not to an unsympathizing go-between. Ganpa had been a soldier in his day too, and knew the only way to keep things straight between the C.O. and the men is to know the men personally.

So it came about that each one of them looked forward to the annual holiday quite as keenly as Philomena. This year they were anticipating it with thirsty joy, after the hot and dusty season in town.

They had not settled where they were going. Philomena had the casting vote, and usually gave

it to some place proposed, because the water in the picture looked so blue, or it had a nice name.

"She is a trifle late," observed Ganpa uneasily, looking out on an exhausted flower-seller propped up against the railings in a torpid condition, while his basket of Shirley poppies wilted, and his nose blistered in the sun.

Christopher took out his watch and regarded it gravely, held it to his ear to see if it was going, and returned it to his pocket.

"Astonishing how slowly time goes," he remarked.

"She won't leave the convent till half-past two," said Margaret with a smile, "and it takes quite an hour and a half to get here."

Margaret Gordon—"Mamie" as they called her—was a tall, slender, girlish woman, with dark blue eyes, and fair, soft, straight hair, piled in masses on the top of her small head, a tender, melancholy mouth, and an absent manner. It always requires some exertion to bring her quite down to earth, but, once there, she was, as her daughter remarked, "quite young."

Nesta was also tall, fair, and slender, but more generously proportioned than her sister-in-law, and with turquoise blue eyes and a complexion all pale coral and cream.

The brilliant light stealing under the striped

awnings showed them all a very attractive group. The room they sat in, like all the house, was beautiful. Good pictures, delicate old Sheraton, lovely cabinets, the delight of Philomena's soul, all inlaid with wonderful landscapes and figures in brass on a vermillion ground-colour and a light brightness permeated the atmosphere. It was distinctly a house that had been lived in by merry, pretty, kindly *good* people, who had left all these influences behind them.

They read on in silence, slumberous and deep, each glancing furtively, now and again, at the clock. Everything was packed, and put away : they were only awaiting Philomena, and Philomena was delayed unconscionably long.

Suddenly, there was the sound of wheels, and it was as if what happened in the palace of the Briar Rose had come to pass in Portman Square. There was the patter of a swift rush up the steps, the sound of an electric bell pressed insistently down, though the hall door stood wide. Then the sound of small feet across the hall and up the stair, followed by a soft commotion and a pleasant babble below.

"Miss Philomena !" cried a voice delightedly.

The door of the room where the four waiting people sat, was quietly opened, and Miss Philomena put in her head, holding it ajar, and smiled

at them joyously. A tall slim girl of eleven, in the convent uniform of severely cut dark blue serge, without a superfluous fold or button, a narrow white cambric collar turned down round her pretty long neck, her brown hair plaited tightly in a tail as thick as a man's arm—what with her plain dark straw hat, and her silk gloves, she might have been mistaken for some wandering novice.

Only that her eyes gave her away. They were the brightest, softest eyes in the world, and they danced and shone like stars in her wild rose face, changing with her expression from grey-blue to indigo-violet, while the pink rushed to and fro in her dimpled cheeks.

"My dear peoples," she said with solemn softness, "I'm so glad to be in the world again!"

And with that she vanished instantly.

They waited for her return with an exchange of smiles. She was not long, but in that brief space she had metamorphosed herself completely. She was glorious now, in white muslin and scarlet—scarlet silk stockings and buckled shoes, and her brown hair all flying about her in shining silky waves, far past her pretty slim waist.

She rushed at her mother, and, beginning with her, hugged and kissed them one after the other. Then she pirouetted daintily, her skirts held in

extended fingers, and sat gracefully down on the floor in front of them.

"Dears," she said in a tone of entire thankfulness, "where are we goin' this holidays?"

Ganpa recited a list of carefully selected places, where it was possible they might go.

She listened gravely attentive.

"I think," she began with an odd little accent of decision. "I rather want to say somethin' first before we begin makin' our mind up——" She looked round them quickly. "Do you min' my sayin' it now," she asked, "or if you'd rather, I'll keep it till after dinner?"

"Losh!" commented Chris in mock terror, "don't fright us. Let's have it, Dearlove."

I may remark here in explanation that Philomena was never called anything at home but Dearlove. She had recognized her inability to live up to the delicate severity of Philomena.

"Well," she resumed in a ruminative tone, "I thought of this nearly all the term—while I was getting my 'Very Goods,' you know—I had to think of somethin'."

"Of course!" agreed Ganpa decidedly. "Of course."

"An' when you're getting 'Very Goods' you do think more than other times. I thought out an awful lot of things. But one thing I can't

ever make out: why God was so precious with babies in this family. Mary Mainwaring has only one uncle, but he has fourteen children ! ”

She made this announcement in an awed tone, with a wide-eyed glance at her audience ; but as they were apparently deep in meditation, she went on with some haste. “ Not that I’d care to have cousins like Mary Mainwaring,” she said, “ they come to see her and bring her the newspapers—*they bring her papers !* They’re an awfully slack lot ! An’ you know I’d be rather sorry for Mary if Mother Mary Noel caught her. Newspapers aren’t allowed. But what I mean is, I do want some children. It’s rather rotten pretendin’ all the time by one’s self. Last holidays, you know, I pretended I was grown up, and it was no fun. Grown-ups don’t want to do nearly all the things that I like. They don’t want Gollywogs in their pockets, or play with dolls, or to pretend to be fairies or anything, and they hardly ever care to eat more’n a pound of chocolates. I think bein’ grown up is simply——”

“ Slow ? ” suggested Chris. “ Pity ’tis, ’tis true. But we can’t help it, Dearlove. Now, if I had any choice in the matter, I’d grow down.”

Dearlove got up and pirouetted again. “ ‘Xactly what I thought of ! ” she cried joyously. “ I can’t grow up to you, so please will you all grow

down to me. Let's pretend we're all the same age till the holidays are over."

"Good!" agreed Christopher. "Excellent fooling! How old may we be?"

"You'd better be all the same age as me," concluded Dearlove agreeably.

"H—u—m!" Ganpa considered the matter, carefully stroking his fierce white moustaches. "Well, the idea has its charm, but I think you had better let me be, say, twenty-five."

"Very well," conceded Dearlove gravely. "An' we must all call each other by our names. I shall call you Chris, uncle; it takes less time: An' I'm goin' to say Nesta, an' Mamie. But I think I will go on sayin' Ganpa, because I'd forget, an' that would give us all away. Won't it be fun?"

"It will so," Chris agreed placidly. "Nesta, you must get a short serge frock. And you, Mamie, had better buy me some thingumies for paddlin' in."

"An' I must tell you," suddenly resumed Dearlove, "that I wouldn't let you come to meet me, or eat any sweets, or do anything I liked, for a mortification, so that I might have a lovely glorious time makin' believe."

"I see," remarked Ganpa thoughtfully; "sort of propitiating the Immortals. Another good idea.

Dearlove, you are brimming with good ideas. Now as to where ? ”

“ I don’t care,” decided Dearlove, “ so long as it has lots of sand, an’ the sea all round it. An’ I’d like it to be a little sort of place, so that whatever way I went we could come to the sea. An’ I’d like it to be a little bit hot, an’ with nice people that would smile at you, an’ be p’lite, an’ give you flowers an’ things if you were friends with them. An’ rocks an’ shrimps. An’, oh, yes ! prawns in little holes in the rocks.”

“ A little place,” repeated Chris slowly, “ with the sea all round it—an’ a smiley sort of people. A little bit hot—an’ rocks an’ shrimps an’ prawns in holes. Nesta, do you remember the month we spent in——”

“ Guernsey ! ” interrupted Nesta, flushing happily. “ Oh, Chris ! that happy little island. Let us go there.”

Chris looked round with a smile in the corners of his kind mouth, and a sparkle in his eye. Ganpa nodded. Mamie smiled dreamily, all she wanted was the sea.

“ Guernsey it is ! ” decided Chris. “ Come along, Ganpa, an’ we will take the tickets.”

“ I think——” hesitated Ganpa, “ you must go on without me. I am crossing to France first.

But I will join you from St. Malo. I have business in Paris."

"You won't be happy," Dearlove warned him.

He smiled at her indulgently, with a little sadness. He was setting out on another visionary trail.

"I shall not be away from you long," he said, rising from his seat and kissing her. "Come, Chris, we can get back before tea if we hurry."

Dearlove flung out her arms and whirled madly round on the floor. "Good-bye!" she called after them, "an' don't forget you're grown down. Mamie, do you think I can really wait for tea till they come back?"

CHAPTER II

THE MARKET IN ST. PETER PORT

"IF you get up early in the morning, Dearlove," remarked Chris instructively, "I will allow you to come with me to the market. It is really a beautiful market."

"Mamie can come too," suggested Nesta with a winsome smile.

Mamie turned in her chair and protested wearily.

"I came here to rest," she said in her soft, melancholy voice. "You promised you would not ask me to go anywhere till Ganpa joined us. I want to think, and you won't give me time to think, because you have so many places to show me. This is an enchanted island; it is all bays. How many bays have I seen? How many rocks that look down over the strong-maned whirlpools of the vasty sea have I scaled with my heart in my mouth. How many caves have I crept up, covering myself with sea-slime. It is all very

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well for Dearlove ! But I begin to feel the burden of my years. I think I have seen enough things."

"Well," expostulated Chris, "you won't ride Sambo ; you are too vain. You think a donkey incongruous with your poetical appearance—that's it !"

"It isn't vanity so much," denied Mamie regretfully, "as an overweening desire to look nice when I'm dead—I have heard that a broken neck is not becoming—besides, Guernsey is no place to trifle with donkeys. I have told Dearlove so—but she is young—She likes riding Sambo—And there are too many bays. I don't like bays."

Dearlove eyed her with an expression of pained surprise.

"Mamie," she reproached severely, "you told me the only thing you didn't like was the tea."

"It isn't really the tea," protested Mamie feebly, "it's the getting up early to drink it. If I go to bed late, and lie awake all night to hear the sea singing and whispering about the shore—and if the skylarks will sing pæans in the dawn, I ought to be allowed to sleep all day."

"We are goin' to St. Sampson's this afternoon," pronounced Dearlove irrelevantly, with an air of complete satisfaction.

"Is it a bay?" inquired Mamie suspiciously, "or a cave?"

"It's a church," explained Chris with diffidence, "and we can go in the Victoria or you can have a Guernsey chair, and sleep all the way."

"Everybody sleeps in Guernsey," said Nesta cheerfully. "I saw an omnibus driver sound asleep while he galloped his horses uphill yesterday."

"Sleep makes you fat," considered Dearlove contemplatively.

"If you are allowed to sleep," retorted Mamie satirically, "it might. But the multitude of caves and bays, and strange rocks will not permit it."

"Mamie!" Nesta's voice bore a warning sound. "You are becoming soured. To-night you shall go to the Candie Gardens and listen to the band. It will be moonlight. You need some music."

"But first of all," decided Chris, "we are all going to market—so rise early and see it with the dew on."

The market of St. Peter Port is built of grey granite. It has been a market since before William of Normandie made England his vassal. The old houses that ran along its sides have been destroyed, and new and spacious alleys put up—long arcades running into a perspective of cool

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grey arches filled up with splashes of vivid colour. They came in to it, out of the steep, sunny, narrow street which climbs past the Guille Alles Library into the first arcade, which had overflowed into the pavement with fruit and flowers.

There are many markets in the world whose quaintness haunts one for life. There is a market in Batavia, for instance, that could never be forgotten, once seen. There the colour stands out in the radiant air like living flame, and the beautiful people are like so many dream pictures wrought by illusion.

There is a market in New Caledonia also ; in the heart of Noumee, that is worthy of long remembrance, and is held in a square of living green, and the tall New Caledonian men and women come to it carrying beautiful things, and garlanded about with flowers and shining shells "an' all that pritty bin'." There is another in Galway to rejoice the artist soul, and yet another in the town of Brisbane, not far from the rapid green river. But of all the markets ever seen, the one in St. Peter Port is most crammed with pictures. Wherever the eye might rove, it falls on a picture ready for the painting.

There was a line of stalls against the dull grey stone, and all along it ran a stacked up fence of gladioli in every conceivable tint of red, and coral

and carmine, brilliantly dazzling; and yet wondrously soft, as if the sweet island air had covered them over with a film of transparent greyness.

Carnations perfumed the air on every side, pungently sweet, like the memory of a suddenly remembered happiness, pink and saffron, coral and parti-coloured, and crimson that was almost black. Roses, daisies and lilies. Little baskets filled with raspberries that looked like translucent jewels, butter disposed handsomely on gorgeous printed handkerchiefs—a rich and amazing effect cheaply gained with a yard of dyed cotton. The little baskets placed upon it seemed woven of strands of sunshine delicately yellow, their varied contents like collections from the mines of Golconda. Peaches like mother-o'-pearl creamily yellow. The intense pure red of the arbutus berry. Great bunches of the island grown grapes, purple-black with a white bloom, green-white with a grey bloom, yellow plums in piles and heaps—black and red plums in larger heaps, tomatoes red, tomatoes pink, tomatoes green; they do a great trade in tomatoes in Guernsey.

Then there were blushing nectarines, apples of every size and colouring, golden and green and streaky, pears and peaches, peaches, and always more peaches. The peaches grow everywhere in

Guernsey, in St. Peter Port they grow on the housetops among the sparrows. And never surely were the necessary essential vegetables so cunningly displayed. Your Guernsey vegetable seller is an artist in disguise, selling for the fun of the thing, and to show that vegetables can look as beautiful as any flower that blows.

The consummate cunning with which they were displayed ! that art of setting a fringy endive among a heap of sunshine—permeated lettuces flanked by darker carrot tops, ferny and soft, with the long forked roots like solid rays of orange-tinted light playing away from them. The parsley and the cabbages like green roses of a gigantic order ; and the asparagus grass. The green peas shelled into a little scrubbed wooden measure bound about with polished silver bands. The parsnips, and turnips, and new potatoes in the curly skins, the broad beans and scarlet runners were all quite beautiful : Glorified by an ever present contact with the omnipresent carnation.

And here and there, thrust into everything, little nose-gays of pot-herbs of the real old-fashioned kind—a little mint, a little thyme, a spray of silver-green sage, a trifle of vervain, chervil and taragon, and in the midst a flaming marigold. Everything set out with such artistic perception of its colour and form, its value in the picture,

and with such immaculate cleanliness. Truly a market worth getting up early for.

And the vendors—deep-eyed women with low soft voices, the voices of the dwellers by the sea. Curious it is, that the sea, of its deep unrest, gives to its people a steady eye, grave and far-seeing, and a low voice, resolute and peaceful. These women had all grey eyes under their many-tucked black sunbonnets. Bonnets of a pattern you may see any day on the barge-folk who walk the streets of ancient Brentford. Little grey shawls about their slender shoulders, and full skirts of quaint old-fashioned print.

The men, tall and bronzed—fishermen all, wearing knitted guernseys. You will see when you go to Guernsey how very inadequate any other word would be to describe that singular garment. Dark blue guernseys with wonderful stitches in them, great boots, and blue trowsers. And how polite the Guernsey men are! What lovely manners they have, how bright-eyed and smiling, and brimful of good jokes among each other. The people on that island must be very happy, they certainly look it.

They are the most curiously honest folks too! Dearlove dropped her purse in her delight, and never noticed till a small boy uncapped before her, and offered it in a sunburnt palm. Then to

her grief he disappeared before she could even say "Thank you."

And wherever one looked there were carnations. I think they must come up all over St. Peter Port in the night season, when every one is asleep. That is why the law forbids small boys to cry out too loudly in the streets.

Mamie and Chris were obstructing the traffic in La Plaidere when a policeman came behind them and took a small boy to task. "You are shouting too loud," he declared ominously. "Don't do it again, or——"

Chris and Dearlove discussed this matter at some length afterwards. What would have been done to that boy had he shouted again, louder than ever. Dearlove said he ought to have shouted, "just to see what would happen." Then she trembled and wondered if the policeman would have shut him up in the dungeons of the Citadel, or made him a semaphore. They work semaphores made of soldier-men on the Citadel all day long. Perhaps they work all night too, but one cannot see them.

"Oh!" said Mamie to an old lady who sat knitting beside a quite marvellous array of bloom, "I never saw anything so beautiful in my life!"

She was really a delightful old lady, with the

sweetest of pink cheeks and tiny mouths, and blue eyes, set in a goffered muslin cap, tied under her pretty old chin in a wide bow. She wore a little black fringed shawl crossed on her breast and held with a huge cameo brooch, and such a wide skirt of blue and white check cotton, starched to a phenomenal stiffness.

She put her head on one side at Mamie's compliment, and gazed past her at Dearlove, wide-eyed behind.

"Please?" said the old lady interrogatively, not looking at Mamie at all.

"Please!"

She reached beside her, and brought forth a basket of the most exquisite peaches. Many peaches had Dearlove seen, and disposed of, but never such peaches as these. The old lady selected the very largest, and handed it out to Dearlove, who was watching her with an absorbing interest.

The child started, bowed, and thanked her with a pretty grace, then bit into it with effusive rapture. The old lady waved aside the offered silver with a sweet pride. She did not wish to sell, not that particular peach. It was for the sake of the little one's beautiful eyes.

Dearlove stood presently in melancholy contemplation of the denuded peach-stone. "What a very large stone," she lamented. "Stones take

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up an awful lot of room inside peaches. Why do they grow with stones in them? Nobody can eat stones. If it were a nut now, or even a pip, but a stone!" and she cast it away in disgust with its ineffectiveness.

Chris comforted her with an enormous bunch of blushing carnations, and a basket of woven sunshine filled with peaches of abnormal size and sweetness. The old lady pinned a Nipitos rose into Mamie's blouse, and they went on.

There were stalls covered with golden butter, and yellow crocks filled with cream cheese. Guernsey cans of copper, of brass, of silver and tin, all filled with the rich Guernsey milk. It was a chord of full-sounding colour in the wide grey spaces.

Dearlove hastened on by herself, and they came upon her in interested conversation with a tall fisherman who sat instructing her from an overturned basket.

On a marble slab beside them, were mackerel dying in chromatic splendour, long grey haddocks, golden red mullet, silver salmon and the great halibut. In a long shallow box at the edge of the slab amid a litter of brown sea-wrack were a company of the most gigantic crayfish and lobsters.

"Are they really alive?" pursued Dearlove in an investigatory tone.

"Surlee, p'tite missie," replied the fisherman.

"They look a queer sort of colour rather," meditated Dearlove thoughtfully. "Why aren't they red?"

"Put 'em in bilin' water an' they comes all right," advised the fisherman. "Varee sweet they is to eat."

"Oh!" protested Dearlove in a shocked tone. "I don't want to boil it. I want one for a pet."

The fisherman took off his blue cap, and seemed to pray into it for a space, as pious men do in church; then he looked over its edge at Chris, with some contortion of his brown face.

"Seems a likely pet, that wan," he remarked feelingly, pointing out an enormous crayfish, "verr pious they is, missie, you see un prayin' wi's hand on heart."

Dearlove bent down and saw the crayfish beating his breast with five cornelian hands, while he spread other five over his hard bosom in ecstasy.

"The dear thing!" she exclaimed in rapture. "Isn't he sweet! just look at him saying Mea Culpa—Chris, please buy him for me. I will keep him in a tub and feed him with flies—we can catch the flies ourselves."

"I would much rather have him for luncheon," thought Chris.

"Oh, poor!" cried Dearlove, spreading out her

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hands in protest at his inhumanity. The crayfish suddenly left off his prayers, and reached for her with a huge claw. She sprang back in consternation.

"Does he always do that?" she inquired diffidently. "Is that his way of bein' p'lite to people."

"That's his way of takin' a bit of you to kàpe," the fisherman informed her placidly.

"A bit of me?" asked Dearlove incredulously, "why?"

"Hungry, misse," responded the fisherman. But the laugh in his eye belied the solemnity of his taciturn features. Dearlove laughed outright.

"Do you feed them on little girls?" she inquired critically.

"Little girls is plenty," said the fisherman austerely. "An' these is rale fine sea-spiders."

She gazed at him in some perplexity while he sat on his basket, the questions evidently thronging to her half-parted lips, but somehow she arrived at the conclusion that polite credulity was the best method, and with a smile she wandered to another marble slab, where she paused thoughtfully.

"Chris," she began softly, "I think they must give them all the plain little girls. What do you think?"

Chris looked critically down on a seeking mass of black and brown claws, huge ugly nipping limbs. The tide of sound from ducks and hens, and every sort of other creature, rolled up and away among the grey arches, like the echo from Tir-na-Thonn. It must have been very distracting to all the poor sea-things accustomed to the soft wash of the waves.

"I don't think they are very kind to the poor crabs and lobsters and things," she resumed suddenly, without waiting a reply to her first question. "They lift them up to show people, and just slap them down again. I would like to be put down gently if I were a crab and had so many legs and arms and things."

"Perhaps," hazarded Chris, pulling his long moustache. "If you had quite so many, you wouldn't mind."

"I don't know," she pondered. "God does give out things queerly; some things have no arms or legs at all, tadpoles, for instance, an' worms. They've simply got to squirm when they want to go anywhere. Give me another peach, Chris."

"Oh, wait till breakfast," remonstrated Chris, "you might get one with a maggot in it, and never know."

"Oh," she remarked pensively, "I collected

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maggots last term, and grubs. I kept them in a match-box one of the sisters gave me." She paused thoughtfully. "The maggots ate the grubs up; they're frightfully piggish sort of things to c'lect. Let's hurry home, I'm quite empty, right through."

CHAPTER III

COMPENSATION

I ALWAYS thought," remarked Dearlove, with her hands together between her knees and her small person twisted round so as to get a full view of her uncle's face, "that tournaments were knights in armour an' spears, an' noble steeds, an' the tented field—all like that sort—where you had to be courageous an' splendid."

"Tournaments in these days," philosophized Chris, pulling his long moustache reflectively, "are almost anything—tennis, golf, billiards, but it comes to the same in the end, you see, for the best man wins—sometimes, and by good luck. This kind of tournament has its merits—it is cooling, for instance."

"Pooh!" said Dearlove discontentedly, "I would like a tournament with knights an' tiltin' at the ring, an' some queens with crowns on. Let's play Neevie-Neevie, Nick-Nack."

They were sitting on the very topmost row of the grand stand, an imposing erection of turkey-red covered benches, overlooking the clear green waters of the harbour. A swift turning tide came up against the grey granite walls below, with a rippling rush, like a whispered song, musical, low, and sweet to listen to.

Dearlove, however, was not in the mood to listen to it. The word "tournament" in the heading to the sports programme had taken her fancy, and determined her on the family going to see the show. Disappointment concerning knights in armour induced a riotous tendency—she lured Chris on to interminable games of odd and even, in which she cheated him in the most barefaced and unscrupulous fashion, with a vast enjoyment of it all.

They paused now and again, once to plot over the possibility of stealing the policeman's helmet off his unconscious head, when he came to a halt beneath them at the back of the stand. Dearlove's long slim fingers fairly ached and quivered in the air over his head.

"Oh!" she panted softly, "wouldn't he be surprised if we took it off an' hid it." Chris held her wrist with an air of mystery.

"Wisht!" he whispered darkly, "forbear, Dearlove; you must not trifle with policemen

in Guernsey. They are not as other policemen. Snatchers of helmets might be urbanely conducted to the depths of the lowermost dungeon in Castle Cornet, there to languish on potatoes and peaches and tomatoes. Or suppose he plopped down on his knees, and cried 'Haro! Haro!' we'd be had up before the Fathers of the Country or the Lords of the County Council or something. It's wisest to forget. 'Tis folly to remember! Dearlove, let us read the programme; it will keep us out of temptation."

Dearlove cast one longing look at the retreating helmet, and with a sigh devoted her energies to reading the list of events.

It was a great occasion, this tournament. Four big men, and strong swimmers, had gathered themselves together from the four ends of the island to prevent Corporal Patrick Quin from carrying off the great silver challenge cup, which he had taken and held for two years against all comers. This year, if he held it still, it would become his own—a perpetual triumph to him, and a sorrow to the Guernsey men.

There were other races—the schoolboys' race, the diving competition, and the two hundred yards' open. But it was the contest for the Cup that had brought Guernsey out from its uttermost corners, and lined the quay edges with Tommies

and handy-men, yachtsmen and mercantile Jacks, and crammed the stands with visitors.

It was a scene of such excitement and hurry that Dearlove's brisk tongue was silent, while her observant grey eye took in every smallest detail of her surroundings. The sea came lapping up against the grey stones, swelling higher and higher in that quick breathless way it has along the Guernsey coast once it has turned from the ebb to the flow.

The first race was timed for three, and the sonorous tones of the grey old cathedral church had just boomed across the harbour waters, when Dearlove was suddenly conscious of a gigantic soldier man, whose black head was on a level with Chris's knee at the end of the row on which they sat.

He was gazing anxiously along the stands, from one packed row to another, as if searching for some one in the densely gathered throng.

His look came up to Chris at length ; almost unconsciously he recognized the officer, and saluted in mechanical fashion with an embarrassed smile, an anxiety clearly showing in the merry Irish eyes.

Irish was writ all over him ; the eyes, the wide humorous mouth and keen straight features. The best type of Celt, large, kind and

generous. It did not need the soft caressing brogue to tell where he hailed from.

"Thick as sardines in a tin," he remarked despairingly, with a backward jerk of his close-cropped head. "Sure ye couldn't put a pin down edgeways betwixt 'em."

And the despair was oddly accentuated in each word. That despair was echoed from somewhere down near his feet.

"Oh, Paddy!" cried a clear little high-bred voice, with an ineffable melancholy in its tones, "there must be a little bit of room somewhere."

"Well now, there isn't, sir," pronounced Paddy, with regretful emphasis and another glance along the top row, past Chris and Dearlove to Nesta and Mamie, watching him with interested eyes.

"Perhaps," suggested the owner of the little voice, "I can sit with Stumpy in the boat. He asked me, Paddy."

"'Tis too late now, sir," groaned Paddy; "they wouldn't be lettin' us take a boat across the course whin the first race is on."

Dearlove is possessed by an insatiable curiosity. She wants to know all there is to be known about everything and everybody. This voice, with its resigned melancholy, so small, so pure, and sweet, fascinated her. She hung over the back

of the stand with Chris, just as much interested, seeking its owner.

"Oh, Paddy!" said the voice patiently. "I would like to see!"

Paddy's face contracted grimly. He stopped and lifted with great tenderness out of the crowd a small boy, whom he set high on his shoulder.

"There!" he ejaculated briefly. "Anyways, you'll see this race."

Dearlove's face went first white, then flushed crimson. Her eyes met those of Chris with a pained bewilderment in their soft depths.

"Paddy," said the boy in the big soldier-man's ear, "I simply can't bear not to see you winning the Cup. I shall grind my teeth all the time I hear the cheers."

"Hark till him now," laughed Paddy. "Sure some wan of thim big chaps will be takin' it away under their jackets this time, and not me at all."

"Oh, no," decided the boy, "you will get it, I know, Paddy. And I *will* not see you!" Dearlove crowded her muslin skirts as near to Mamie as she could, and bent towards them.

"There's lots of room between us," she cried eagerly, with a little shyness in her pretty voice, as she indicated the little vacant space. "Heaps. Honour brightly! isn't there, Chris?"

"Room for a regiment," agreed Chris cheerfully. "Come along, young soldier!"

Paddy beamed on the party collectively, his eyes thanking Dearlove the while.

"There ye are now!" he exclaimed delightedly, lifting the boy's small figure across to Chris. "Thank ye kindly, sir—a bit careful. Himself doesn't be that cautious as I'd like. On the top row now, Master Reggie, an' the fine view of it all. Sure ye wouldn't be better if ye were the King. Thank ye, miss. Master Reggie is the great sportsman—so long!"

He saluted, with a wide smile including them individually and collectively, and elbowed hastily away through the throng.

Chris held the boy for a moment on his knee, regarding him kindly.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he protested softly, "but if you would please allow me I would rather stand. I—I am sure you will be inconvenienced."

He slipped down by Chris's side, and stood eyeing him, with a kind of remote scrutiny, as belonging perhaps to another and strange species of mankind, of which he had much admiration, but was inclined to fear, and in doubt of.

He might have been seven so far as stature went, but the tiny shrunken figure with its pro-

tuberant shoulders forbade all guess-work. His face, in its transparent unearthly loveliness, had the sorrowful wisdom of a thousand years of painfully acquired knowledge ; and yet the eyes, deep, large, luminous and beautiful, were the eyes of a lonely little child. He looked from Chris to Dearlove, who was bending forward with one hand on her knee, crushing her petticoats back to make room for him, and shrank instinctively, as if the contrast of her intense vitality, her strength and happiness, were too much for him to bear.

Then the look travelled on to Mamie, to Nesta, and back to Dearlove and Chris. At Chris it stopped, and all at once he smiled. Under the wistful scrutiny, Chris had experienced a kind of melancholy amusement, but at the beauty of that smile his breath caught and his eyes dimmed, the deformed little figure disappeared, and left him wondering at the perfection of the soul which dwelt in its battered house with such patience and sweetness.

He lifted him to the little space between himself and Dearlove, and the boy said no word, only smiled again—at Dearlove this time, then sat content, his thin little hands loosely clasped and swinging between his knees, assured somehow of being safe with friends, still a little shy, but at ease.

"Is your friend the Patrick who is going to swim?" inquired Dearlove, with a delicately friendly accent.

The boy's face brightened into an actual radiancy as he turned to her. "I should rather think so," he returned happily. "Why, he is the very best swimmer in the world. He could swim when he was a baby—in the Atlantic too."

"Oh!" murmured Dearlove, "in the Atlantic."

"The waves are enormous, you know," continued the boy, with a little panic of returning shyness. But the absorbed interest in Dearlove's expression dissipated his fear, and he went on with a sudden rush of confidence.

"He's had the Cup twice. This time he can keep it altogether for his own. It's a splendid Cup."

"I know," Dearlove assured him. "Chris and me saw it in a window."

"There he is," said Chris, pointing downwards to the floating platform on the blue water of the harbour, where Patrick Quin had appeared attired in a bathing towel of immense proportions. He waved a huge hand upwards at the stand, and the boy returned the greeting with a frantic wave of his hat.

"I chose his colours," he announced eagerly.

"Blue an' white—that's the colour of the sea, an' the wave-tops. I thought the sea might like them. Paddy is very strong. He's awfully brave too; he's got seven medals an' the Victoria Cross. He's six feet three an' a half and he can bend iron with his hands."

His voice, extraordinarily soft and musical, had a kind of instinctive culture in it, very pretty to listen to, a distinction in itself, the echo of it throbbed with pride as he recounted the praises of his friend.

"Oh!" cried Dearlove, enthusiastically, "I do like him! How did he get the Victoria Cross?"

"He carried my father out of the line of fire at Spion Kop," returned the boy softly, and, sighing under his breath, lifted his shabby straw hat imperceptibly off his head. "He died after."

"He died after!" Chris repeated the brief phrase mentally, moved to the very soul in some mysterious sympathy for this crooked life. The pity of it went to his heart's core, the breeding, and beauty and the appeal that was yet so brave!

About twenty small boys plunged into the water from the floating platform, and went plunging, snorting and puffing towards the umpire's boat, struggled on to the buoy and back again, cheered and encouraged thereto by the

facetious Tommies and their sailor-men companions.

"The next is the Cup race," remarked the boy with an accent of content, as the swimmers, dripping and shivering, climbed up out of the water to the dressing tent. "Here they come!"

He leant forward, tense with excitement, growing very white, as Patrick Quin with his muscular arms across his chest, like a statue of Hercules in striped blue and white, towered up, head and shoulders above the others on the line.

There was the sharp crack of the pistol, and the line was in the water. Patrick's arms went out, and he flashed headforemost down, making a small tidal wave before him, as he came in the rear of the others. Two of them got clean away; they were really fine swimmers, tall straight men, with the sea in their blood. Patrick passed the ruck, and came up third. Little by little, swimming on his side, cleaving the water in a clear line before him like a fish, leaving hardly any wake, he became second, but that was not till the first two hundred yards were behind him, then he came near to the leading swimmer as he rounded the buoy, and they swam neck to neck.

An indescribable uproar greeted him as he came abreast of the boats along the course in which his companions-in-arms had stationed

themselves. Patrick was swimming along with mighty sweeps of his arm, silent and easy as if it were child's play. The other man's progress was a more evident sign of their pace. He was noisy and hurried in his stroke, breathing loudly, and puffing the salt water out of his mouth.

Patrick's calm fairly infuriated his friends. Threats, objurgations, entreaties, surrounded him on every side. There were more adjectives hurled at Corporal Quin than are contained in the English language. He turned on his back, and with big powerful arms thrashed the green waters with the placid unemotion of a steam flail. And still he had not passed the other man. A scarlet-clad companion-in-arms hung over the quay edge below the grand stand, and weepingly implored Patrick to "Remember the ould regiment!" His colonel stood with legs straddling apart, agitatedly screwing in a clouded monocle, and inquiring off a speechless non-com—if the powers of evil had for that moment possession of Patrick Quin, that he refused to bestir himself in the face of victory.

They were not above a dozen yards from the platform on their return, and the crowd was sighing and groaning, swaying towards the edge in its keenness.

A silence came down on the packed hundreds,

in which the little lap, lap of the waves sounded musically through the regular rhythm of the swimmers' arms. A breathless, silent space, which Dearlove sat with her eyes rivetted by the boy's face. White as death, he sat, surprised and incredulous, yet with a kind of sick fear in the clear depths of his great eyes, his thin hands clutching his worn knickers. Chris was watching him too, but with an occasional glance at the contest being so bravely fought below. He had no fear, but he dared not break the spell of the child's silence to reassure him.

Perhaps Paddy wanted to make assurance doubly sure, and saved himself up for that final three lengths. Anyhow, he suddenly turned over, and, putting aside the waters with wide, magnificent strokes, was instantly past his antagonist, and with incredible swiftness upon the platform, dripping long streams of green water at the judge's feet.

A mighty roar went up from the crowd, a roar that echoed and rumbled from harbour to the hills; shouts, cries, roars of delight and admiration. The soldier and sailor-men were possessed by a temporary madness, and bellowed themselves hoarse. The Islanders were quick to render their tribute to the better man. Paddy had a proper ovation—he had won the Cup right royally.

It may have been that more than half the joy of victory was the happiness, the pride of the pale little lad, who was Paddy's first thought, when he scrambled out of the harbour. His huge laugh was all triumph, as he stood waving his hand towards the grand stand.

Following his gaze, a woman seated among the Governor's guests turned and looked also. A strangely beautiful woman, with a hard mouth and long subtle eyes. Her glance wavered from the boy to the little girl, stooping forward beside him, her small face brilliant as a rose.

"Who is that lady?" asked Dearlove, retreating with a little air of pride, as if unconsciously offended by the look, and the curious smile that succeeded it.

"She is my mother," responded the little lad, with a pathetic dignity. For an instant the two children looked into each other's eyes; the one so loved and caressed, so overflowing with strength, and joy, and delight in life; the other burdened with the weight of an awful suffering and the bitterness of a humiliated and beauty-loving soul, hungering for affection, and shut out from it into an incomprehensible isolation.

Dearlove edged nearer, and their hands met. She held his in a comforting clasp, warm and tight, her little heart unconsciously swelling

with indignation towards that lovely, unknown mother of his.

Mamie marked with a sidelong glance, but said no word. Chris whistled softly under his breath. The Tommies were singing "For he's a jolly good fellow," at the tops of their voices, while a few picked tall men of Paddy's regiment carried him perforce along the quay.

The crowd seethed and swirled around him, carrying him out towards the wide wind-swept space between the quay and the street.

Chris lifted the boy on his knee, with a careful tenderness, and pointed seawards.

"Look," he said simply.

The sun was sinking in a glamorous golden light. Still effulgent and glorious lay the wondrous sea; heaving softly, unbroken by line or ripple along its wide surface. The walls of the harbour below Castle Cornet, ebony topped with gold, formed a wide gateway to the boundless waters, and within that gateway stood a tall barque.

Like a vision she stood in, almost motionless; yet every sail billowing softly out over the graceful hull, painted into cloth of gold by the sinking sun.

The wistful sorrowfulness of the little lad's face was suddenly smitten into sheer ecstasy. Every trace of earthliness, suffering and misery,

was wiped clean out in unspeakable delight ; in the beauty of what he saw, the little suffering crooked body was forgotten.

Chris tightened his clasp till the noble boyish head rested against his broad chest. Chris loved all helpless and suffering things. His big heart went out in some inexplicable fashion to this child, making him for the moment feel happily satisfied as the clasp of Dearlove's fingers filled him with a fluttering joy.

Slowly the golden light faded, the vision glorious dissolved into black and grey, touched here and there with rose. Then, with a start, his eyes met those of Paddy, regarding him with immense satisfaction from the end of the emptying stand.

Chris bent over to the tall soldier.

" Does he live with his mother ? " he whispered, hardly knowing why he put the question.

" Thanks be to God—no," responded Patrick, with a curious subdued fervour.

" I am very thankful to your honour," he added loudly, holding out his arms. " Especially to the little lady. Will ye come now, Master Reggie dear ? "

Reggie came reluctantly down off Chris's knee, and bowed, then put on his worn straw hat with a pathetic grace.

Dearlove stood up, and put her arms round his neck.

"Good-bye, Reggie," she cried softly, kissing him on the cheek. "Good-bye, an' we'll have a long talk next time."

He regarded her with an air of bewildered surprise, smiling faintly, his eyes lingering from one to the other. Then he put out a transparent hand, and laid it in that of Chris.

"Good-bye," he said, with wistful dignity. "I would love to see you again. But——"

He paused, while Patrick took him in his arms, and looked over the broad shoulder of his soldier friend.

"Yes?" inquired Chris encouragingly.

Reggie shook his head, and smiled again.

"Nobody ever wants to see me again," he burst out quickly. "Good-bye; thank you! thank you. Good-bye."

He kept his eyes on them as long as he was in sight, twisting round in Patrick's arms to look, till the corner hid him from view.

Dearlove suddenly buried her face in Mamie's laces, with a sob.

"Don't cry, don't cry, Dearlove!" said Chris, in a curiously husky voice. "That little lad has his compensations—believe me."

But he wondered as he went homewards,

holding a very quiet Dearlove by the hand, if any one had ever kissed that wasted, beautiful little face before, that such angelic happiness should have flashed into it at the touch of a child's lips. And he wondered also if the compensation reached far enough, and if it would last for what was obviously a brief time.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE HEART OF A CHILD

"**H**ALT!" commanded Chris in a tone of breathless authority. "Dearlove, I will not run uphill at the rate of more than sixty miles an hour. My figure will not permit it—I'm pumped—if you insist upon this speed I—shall—er bust."

"Well," protested Dearlove, sitting down on the tea-basket, "you said 'set the pace,' an' I set it; I can go much quicker than this. You should see me go up a hay stack!"

"Thanks! I would rather we discussed the landscape. Nesta, have you provided a dustpan among the tea paraphernalia, and a brush?"

"A dustpan!" echoed Nesta, sinking among the bracken on the side of the steep asphalted path that leads to the Citadel on its perch over the wide sea, "a dustpan! what for?"

"Why, to sweep up what is left of me after this expedition," grumbled Chris, fanning him-

self with his hat, as he sat opposite to her. "For a man of my size, this kind of conduct is little short of indecent, to say nothing of its wearing effect."

Dearlove eyed him with a little laugh, but a serious expression on her small face. "I know what's the matter with you," she declared emphatically, "you haven't grown down enough."

Chris slapped one knee with an exclamation of enlightenment. "That's it!" he agreed blankly. "Now why did I never think of such an obvious explanation? I must grow down at least another ten years."

"It's a pity you're so awfully big," sighed Dearlove; "it is so inconvenient gettin' through holes an' things."

"Sakes alive!" exploded Chris wrathfully, "you don't want me to crawl into holes, surely?"

"Well," said Dearlove cautiously, as if feeling her way on the matter, "I did rather want to go into that one—it looks so nice and adventury—we might find a dragon or something in it."

She indicated a narrow gap in the brambles, immediately above the low granite wall, and fell to studying it with great and speculative interest.

"Losh!" groaned Chris, with a resigned melancholy, "I suppose it must be done, but let

me warn you, Dearlove, this fondness of adventure will be your ruin. Some day you will find a dragon or something—and then I won't wait—no, I won't. I'm not going to spoil my complexion or my clothes for anybody ; Nesta wouldn't like it."

"Poof!" derided Dearlove scornfully, "Nesta doesn't care about your clothes. I don't believe that about your complexion either. If you're afraid of the dragon you needn't come, an' I'll make this adventure myself. It's a very dark hole, an' sometimes they do lurk in holes like this sort."

- "Nay," cried Chris dramatically, "never say that I deserted a boon-companion in the hour of need. Dearlove, I'll risk this desperate undertaking. Show me the way to the dragon's cave."

"We'll take the tea-basket," considered the lady thoughtfully. "If it's a nice sort of cave we can have tea in it ; if it's not, we must just bring it down again. I'll climb up first an' you can give it to me."

She tucked in her curt petticoats of scarlet muslin, and scrambled up the little wall. Chris, with a laugh at his own agility, heaved up the tea-basket and followed her, crashing his way through the brambles and bracken upwards. All at once he stooped and disappeared.

Presently a voice came from high overhead, near the Citadel walls.

"I say, Mamie! Nesta, come on; it's simply lovely up here—sort of rocky place, an' all ferny, with a path. We're goin' on adventurin'. Do come."

Nesta and Mamie looked at each other and laughed, pretty much as Chris had done.

"This is growing down with a vengeance," smiled Nesta merrily, "How I wish Ganpa was here!"

"I wonder," mused Mamie from under her wide-brimmed hat, "if Ganpa could negotiate that hole, and the sort of rocky place. We have let ourselves in this time, Nesta."

Nesta laughed again, and examined the gap in the hedge with a careful eye.

"I suppose we must follow," she questioned.

"They have the tea-basket," sighed Mamie with resignation, putting a pointed toe into a crevice of the wall. "Here's for it!"

The gap in the hedge led them upwards to a well-beaten path running round the ramparts with the sea far below; they were on a heather-covered promontory crowned by the Citadel, overlooking Saint's Bay.

Half-way round, they came upon Chris and Dearlove arguing with some heat over a lump

of quartz. Dearlove said it was a Sark stone, such as were displayed in the shop windows, and suggested it would be a nice thing to have polished and set, as a birthday present for Mamie.

Chris with Philistine directness declared it was a paving stone, and as such had hardly any intrinsic value, except to such people as loved to decorate their persons with paving stones, and went on to point out there was an ample supply to be had between where they were at that moment and Gardener's Hotel.

Dearlove requested him with inscrutable calm to put it in his pocket and carry it for her.

"Put it in my pocket, forsooth!" he exclaimed passionately. "Blowed if I will! I'd have you know, miss, this coat was not built for the carriage of paving stones."

"Very well," protested Dearlove in hot wrath. "When I'm grown up, you needn't ask me to love you, or to be your boon-companion any more, for I simply won't—so there!"

"Ha! ha! sayeth the war horse," quoted Chris. "Here's a pretty situation! Rather than face such barren prospect, Dearlove, I would order out everything in my wardrobe, even to my new uniform—it has no pockets in, to speak of, but that's a mere detail. I'm prepared to sacrifice the sleeves. Hand over the paving stone."

"What's a wheen of stones, anyway?"

Having reduced him thus to submission, Dearlove threw her stone into the sea, and they struggled onwards with the tea-basket, Mamie and Nesta in the rear. By-and-bye, the narrow little up-hill track terminated at the foot of a tiny plateau, backed by the towering granite cliff. Just a little smooth heathergrown level space, thrown far and high away up over the murmuring splash of the tide. Once on it, they seemed as it were pendant in the warm blue summer air, with all ocean calling and whispering below and around and the bees booming in and out among the heather bells and sea-pinks.

And there, propped on his elbows with dreaming eyes, that hardly recognized their presence, lay little Reggie listening to the song of wind and tide.

"Hallo!" cried Dearlove delightedly, "if it isn't Reggie!"

He sat upright, growing deadly white, then colouring scarlet with pleasure and surprise.

"What a strange thing!" he faltered shyly. "I—I was thinking about you; isn't that queer?"

"Not so very queer," dissented Dearlove, shaking back her mane of brown hair and sinking down beside him. "Because Chris an' me have

been thinkin' ever so much about you. How did you get up here ? ”

“ Paddy brought me,” explained the boy, still paling and flushing, as he placed his delicate little hand in that of Chris and smiled up at him with a kind of incredulous delight. “ Up that way,” and he pointed to a sheer descent, narrow and ribbon like to the sands of the little bay below.

“ Oh, indeed ! ” Chris looked down with unconcealed interest ; “ that is very entertainin’, as the Americans say. Pray where does Paddy keep his wings ? ”

“ I—I beg your pardon ? ” Reggie looked from Dearlove’s sparkling face to Chris, very grave and tall before him, the embarrassment growing visibly.

Dearlove burst into a little peal of laughter, and patted the backs of his hands.

“ Don’t mind him,” she admonished ; “ he really can’t help talkin’ like that sort ; it’s part of the game, I think. We’re havin’ a game rather. You will like it if you come in. It’s make-believe. You must come in. I couldn’t bear you not to ; I like you so much. His name,” she went on eagerly, pointing at her uncle, “ is Christopher. But you can call him Chris. That little small lady is Mamie, and the tall fair one is Nesta. My name is Dearlove for short, but it really is Phil-

omena. I never could be good enough for Philomena. We are all pretendin' to be the same age, an' I think we're cousins. Now let's pretend you're a cousin too."

"Where," asked Chris in a deep voice, turning aside to hide the smile on his lips, "is the tea-basket?"

Reggie recovered from his amazement, to point out, in abashed fashion, that he was at that moment sitting on it—a discovery which apparently caused Chris some mild wonder. Then he and Dearlove remembered simultaneously they had brought no water for the tea, and they started off at headlong pace to get some from Miss Audoire at the Ladies' Pool. Reggie looked down after them, with a wistful wonder and delight struggling through the sadness in his great eyes.

He turned to Mamie with shy diffidence which appealed to her irresistibly.

"Can she mean that," he asked hesitatingly, "about being cousins?" The sudden little burst of hope in his clear voice was more pathetic than tears.

"Most people, you see," he went on quietly, "don't like me—when—when they see me standing up. They turn their backs, you know—" The suffering in his eyes was almost terrible. The sound of it brought out in the two tender

womanly hearts who heard, such loving pity as he had never dreamt of in his little day, and all at once the determination and steadiness was gone. He hung tremulous on their answer, dry of lip and eye, as if a kingdom depended on it.

Mamie took his hand in hers, and smoothed it gently, as Dearlove might have done.

"My little girl always means what she says," she assured him gravely, as if seeing plainly how important a matter this was to him, "and I really think it would be very kind of you to join the Make-Believe. You see, we may pretend very badly at times ; it is quite a long time since we were children outside our hearts. Dearlove is not like other children, because she has till lately been the only child among a great many grown-ups, and she has always been thrown a good deal on her imagination for company. She is the only child among us, and we love her so much that we just do anything she asks, if we can. You won't be surprised at anything we do or say, will you, Reggie ? "

"I—I," he stammered breathlessly, flushing crimson again. "Why, I think you are all charmin'. I have thought such a lot about you ever since the sports, especially about Dearlove." He hesitated a moment over the pretty name, while the colour ebbed out of his transparent

cheeks, leaving him with a curious suppressed happiness of expression. "I don't quite understand it," he said quietly. "You are all people I seem to know quite well—I have always known you—but I never thought you would be real. I did not think people like you *could* be real. Dearlove is like thinking of spindrift; don't know what spindrift is? I heard a man say it once and I wondered what it could mean, but it gave me a sort of happy feeling as if I were straight. It is the same sort of feeling as listening to the wind on a wet day, blowing through apple blossoms. I thought that was not a real feeling either, till Chris held me up to look at the ship that day. Nobody ever held me like that before. But I knew, when he did, that somebody must have done so—long ago. I wanted it so much."

Poor little maimed poet with the beautiful soul! It looked out of his eyes then with a new-born joy. "How little," thought both these women who listened, "had made him happy."

Happiness lies in dreaming always in the heart of the child, a mere touch will wake it. In this child's heart it had awakened to a bliss that was almost intolerable.

Mamie glanced past him and down at the steep descent, with an involuntary shudder.

"Is it safe," she asked softly, "for you to be alone up here?"

"Oh yes," he smiled brightly from his nest in the heather and bracken. "I love to be up here by myself. When my back is very bad, Paddy carries me here, and I lie till the sea sings the pain out of it. I love the sea. Do you?"

"Very dearly," Mamie assured him, watching Nesta as she laid out the tea on little edges of rock, listening attentively to their conversation the while.

"We are Highlanders, Reggie. We have the sea in our hearts."

"The sea in our hearts!" Reggie repeated the musical phrase with a lingering delight in the soft vowels. "That is what I feel sometimes—as if it wanted me——" He broke off with a radiant expression. "Here they come," he exclaimed excitedly; "I am glad!"

Dearlove and Chris came toiling up the hill together, with a jug of water between them. They were extemporizing a rhymed history of an original pattern, concerning the subsequent adventures of Jack and Jill.

Reggie laughed softly, as the strange couplets reached his ears. The new relationship seemed fully established when they at length reached the top, and, having delivered over the jug to

Nesta, flung themselves in an exhausted condition one on each side of him.

He could not take his eyes off them. Mamie, with her soft voice and tender ways. Nesta's kindly silences were well enough; but to his starved, lonely little soul these other two were the realization of an impossible dream.

They were such a fascinating pair: the big, deep-voiced, kind-eyed man and the beautiful child. Chris was so full of merry quips and odd cranks. His sayings were so irresistibly funny; Reggie could not remember that he had ever laughed before. At first it sounded a little unnatural in his ears—the ring was so strange, but before long he had forgotten, and was laughing as readily as Dearlove herself.

And it was startling, had they paused to consider it, how quickly he reached an intimate understanding of them, how swiftly he grasped their chaff and banter. He seemed one of themselves whom they had, as he himself expressed it, "always known."

The tea was nectar; the scones and cake ambrosia.

Never in all his brief suffering life had he tasted such happiness, or known such companionship and joy. Now and again a pang, poignant and quick, would stab him and turn him sick with

fear. The time would soon be gone ; he might never see them again.

He stroked Chris's big brown hand, as it lay in the heather, with a caress that went to the big man's soft heart.

" I am full of the sea," he said dreamily. " Do you know how happy that is, to be full of the sea ? "

Dearlove, sitting on a boulder, nodded with emphasis.

" Course I do," she agreed joyously. " Your heart ripples an' laughs."

She shook together the flowers she had gathered in her skirt, and began to weave a garland.

Reggie touched it admiringly.

" How pretty ! " he commented wistfully.

" Isn't it ? " asked Dearlove. " Mamie learnt how to do it when she was a little girl, then she taught me."

She took up a sea-pink and put it in between her teeth, till she fastened the end, then added it. The wind came up and sent her brown hair streaming like a shining cloud behind her.

He smiled up at her with a dreamy glow in his thin face.

" Mamie is really your mother, isn't she ? " he questioned.

" Not in the Make-Believe, 'cept on Sundays

an' Fridays, because we go to church on those days," she explained carefully; "other days she has to be simply lots of people. To-day she is being my little girl."

"Regard me," invited Chris amiably, "I am her little boy."

Reggie laughed under his breath, such a soft noiseless little laugh, and picked a blue-bell, looking at it before he handed it up to Dearlove with a vague wonder.

"It is so perfect," he commented in a shame-faced little way. "Why are some things made so perfect? They can't feel what it is not to be so. Sometimes it hurts me to look at roses."

"But why?"

Dearlove's grey eyes were very wide.

"Because I am so crooked," he replied quietly.

For an instant the long black curling lashes fluttered down over the beautiful eyes. The well of tears lay always very close to the fountain of laughter, but somehow Dearlove felt that to see her tears would shame this bitterness, and she would not in her tender little soul have added even the weight of a tear to his suffering.

She looked up at him.

"When God made you," she began steadily, "He must have made you straight. You couldn't have been crooked. He didn't mean you to be.

Anyway, I don't think it matters, because you know your soul simply must be straight, no matter what you are outside. I have an uncle, not Chris, an' he's an 'ologist. He goes an' digs up people's bones that have been dead for ages, an' he 'xplained to me that the bones of people never matter a bit to God, because they can't be taken to heaven, you know. It's only the souls He cares about. Will you come to Saint's Bay with us to-morrow ? ”

The quick inquiry at the end of this disquisition arrived with a disconcerting suddenness. That was Dearlove's way. She generally soared till her anxious relations feared she was gone for ever, then came down with a swiftness and matter-of-factness that flattened them out, metaphorically speaking.

Reggie was positively electrified.

“ Oh ! ” he gasped. “ Go with you—I ? ” He sat and gazed at her in silence too happy for words, then was suddenly overpowered by a hideous remembrance.

“ I can't walk,” he said with a grim little set of his sensitive lips, “ at least, not much.”

“ Oh, you needn't,” she assured him ; “ you can ride Sambo. Sambo is my donkey ; he's an awful dear ! Chris and me will walk on each side. Won't we, Chris ? ”

"We will so," agreed Chris, watching the boy intently. "Where shall we meet you, Reggie?"

"Master Reggie! Master Reggie! What ho?"

"What ho!" responded Reggie valiantly. Corporal Patrick Quin was coming up the narrow little path, as if he had the seven-league boots on.

He paused breast high with the little plateau, and beamed on the party, as if he thought it the most natural thing in the world to find them there. His keen blue eyes took in at one quick glance the new happiness in the boy's face, the new alertness in his frail body—the forgetfulness of himself that was stranger than all.

"Well, now," he exclaimed quietly, "if this doesn't bate cock-fightin'. Wasn't it only this very mornin' we talked about the little lady, an' the gentleman, an' all." Patrick bowed gallantly and respectfully to each and all, as he proceeded. "Weren't you sayin', Master Reggie, they would be gone away, an' didn't I know well they would be for stayin' on this long while. This bangs all for luck!"

"We have had such fun, Paddy," remarked Dearlove, "I do wish you had been here too."

"Sure I might a bin of use, an' that's a true word," returned Patrick with a sparkle. "Master Reggie, you've put on a good two inches since this mornin'."

"To-morrow," went on Dearlove calmly, "we are goin' to take him to a picnic at Saint's Bay."

"Think of that now," remarked Corporal Patrick blandly; "'tis himself will be in luck this day."

"An' please tell us where we can come for him?"

Reggie stood up as she spoke, and she held him by the arm, as if to steady him on his legs. His little figure was silhouetted with painful distinctness against the misty blueness of the summer afternoon, fragile and faint, like the profile of some fine shadow. The deep joy in his eyes, in contrast with that transparent little body, was painful to contemplate.

Patrick Quin turned to Chris, with a questioning eye. He trusted them all, but above all this big kindly gentleman; they meant to be good to his little charge, and Patrick was hungry for the glimpse of pleasure offered him. The lingering doubt was—Why? Why were they so kind to the forlorn little hunchback, who usually crept away from the contact of the world, as a snail creeps into its shell? Yes. That was the miracle to Patrick, that Reggie was happy. Not shy, not abashed or humiliated or suffering. There was a touch of witchcraft in the business.

Patrick did not quite like it, and yet was swelling with gratitude.

"He won't be walkin' much, sir?" he asked soberly.

Chris shook his head, and rose mysteriously, conveying something from his pocket to Patrick's left hand, as he lifted up Reggie on his strong arm.

"He won't need to walk at all," was the assurance; "we have a donkey."

"An' there's nothing better nor an ass. Sure, didn't an ass carry the King of Heaven," remarked Patrick, solemnly descending a step with every word. "Thank ye, sir; if ye'll be at the guardroom up above, by the gate, sir, you'll be findin' him ready; at ten, sir? Well an' good!"

Reggie laughed at them over the stalwart shoulder of his friend, and waved a delicate hand.

"Good-bye, Dearlove," he cried happily. "Good-bye, Chris. Nesta and Mamie, good-bye. How shall I live till to-morrow? Oh, Paddy, I am so glad."

They hung over the cliff edge, watching him go down, down, slowly and with little stops here and there, as the path grew perilously near the measure of Patrick's feet. At last they were

down on the yellow sand, waving upwards at them in the sunlit air.

"I do love Reggie," remarked Dearlove with a sudden energy. "I wish he was a real cousin."

"Nesta," inquired Chris thoughtfully, "does that child remind you of any one?"

Nesta pondered for a while, her eyes following the tall figure, small now, in the far distance, as a doll, walking across the sands below.

"He reminds me of something; I think it is a picture."

"Precisely," agreed her husband. "A picture!"

"Do you like him?" asked Dearlove.

"Do I like him!" repeated Chris. "Pray, young woman, do you like him?"

"Course not," responded Dearlove quickly, "I rather love him; he is a dear!"

CHAPTER V

THE KISS OF THE SEA

THEY had pushed Sambo up the greater part of the steep narrow road to the Citadel, but he put his small black hoofs resolutely into the asphalt of the sloping barrack square and refused to budge a step farther.

The victoria in which sat Mamie and Nesta, surrounded by baskets, immediately behind, drew up in the kindly shadow of the frowning wall; while the driver, imperturbable as a wooden Goddama, waited the result of the impending discussion between Sambo and his mistress.

Nesta and Mamie hung over the carriage, encouraging the refractory Sambo to go on, but he ignored that counsel with a stoical indifference.

"If I had a donkey, an' he wouldn't go," remarked Chris, wiping his heated brow, "do you think I would wallop him? Oh, no, no, no!" There was a subdued fervour in the tone, which

led Dearlove to suspect he might have treated that donkey to something warmer than a mere walloping.

"You should push harder," she declared impatiently, looking over her shoulder at him, as Chris once more applied himself to propelling Sambo from behind. "Why don't you push?"

"Why don't I push?" inquired Chris satirically. "You might as well push Ben Nevis. Why don't you pull?"

"I've nearly pulled his head off," protested Dearlove tearfully. "I shall have to lure him on with my last carrot, Chris," and she almost wept at the thought. She was saving that carrot for a future emergency.

"If you do," warned Chris, "we'll never get him off the shingle coming back. Why didn't you bring more?"

"If I'd brought fifty," lamented Dearlove, "he'd just have given one chew to them, an' been as bad as ever."

Then suddenly she was seized with a brilliant idea, and began to whirl herself about like a silky cloud at Sambo's head.

"I know! I know!" she cried rapturously. "Oh, Chris, such an idea! I'll dangle it on the end of Mamie's sunshade, an' he'll run."

She borrowed the devoted sunshade in an

instant from its doubting owner, and secured the carrot with her handkerchief to the end of the stick, then threw it across her shoulder and stood invitingly dangling it at Sambo's obdurate nose.

Sambo surveyed it for a time, with purely dispassionate interest from the depths of a stoical calm that would have hardly been rippled by lyddite, remaining statuesquely still.

She returned the look with one of incredulous reproach, addressing him in tones of reluctant sorrow, more than in anger. Sambo was one of her cherished illusions, the donkey of her babyhood—and these fits of obstinacy were his sole and only drawback. However freely she might have condoned it another time, she felt that every moment would be one of intolerable doubt to the little boy, whose last word to them had been blissful anticipation.

"I thought," she declared with regretful emphasis, "you were the nicest donkey in the world, Sambo; but I never knew you could be so horrid in your mind, 'specially when I've 'splained to you that our new cousin is waitin'. Chris, what am I to do with him?"

She turned to Chris in despair, since her oration had no other effect on the refractory Sambo than to make him blink merrily, as if he considered it all an excellent joke.

"Dynamite him !" returned Chris vindictively, "and give him to the poor."

Dearlove pondered over this advice for a moment, with her back turned to her donkey. "I rather think he oughtn't to be dynamited first," she thought, with considerable enjoyment of the prospect ; "he wouldn't be any use to the poor like that sort ; but I think we might give him to that old woman who sells apples at the church steps. She told me she had such a long way to walk with her apples—they're rather sour apples too !"

She was evidently working out some analogy between the flavour of the apples and the necessity for the old apple-woman having a donkey, when Sambo suddenly reached out in spite of Mamie's warning cry and took one huge and comprehensive mouthful, which included not only the carrot, but a portion of the sunshade, and a good half of Dearlove's floating brown hair.

Then he became once more imperturbably immovable.

"Save me," shrieked Dearlove. "Oh, Chris, I'm sure he's a dragon or somethin' in disguise, an' he's goin' to devour me, or fly away. Oh, do save me ! he's bitin' my head off. I shall be silly without a head, Chris !"

Under the awesome impression that Sambo

was resolved into some ferocious wild beast intent upon gore, she backed across the square, downhill, in the direction of the portal, whence a Guernsey chair was placidly moving towards them. Mamie sprang out of the carriage and hastened to the rescue, Nesta immediately behind her. Chris took hold of Sambo's upper and lower jaw, and was inducing him, with considerable vigour of muscle and language, to move them apart. Dearlove, with a nice recognition of the opportunity, shrieked contentedly on. The situation, with all its risks, pleased her immensely.

Sambo held on like grim death ; it was a question whether he declined to resign the carrot or the hair ; but evidently he had made up his mind that both were desirable articles of diet, and he was prepared to be blowed before he'd give them up.

Behind them the chair advanced, its occupant apparently overcome with curiosity concerning their doings. The driver, too, was absorbed in watching them, so that when Sambo opened his mouth as suddenly as he had shut it, and released Dearlove, she and the carrot, the sunshade, and Chris fell pell-mell up against him, to the imminent danger of upsetting the chair, contemplative pony, driver, and fare together.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the fare austerely, as he recovered his balance. "This is a pretty sort of welcome home! Chris, I would just as soon be fallen upon by a mountain. Dearlove, embrace me a little later on when I am not labouring under the impression that you are an earthquake in disguise. So!"

"Good heavens!" cried Chris repentantly, "it's the governor! Sorry, sir; hope we have not injured you."

"Not permanently," joked Ganpa. "Gently, gently, Dearlove."

"Ganpa!" she shrieked, throwing herself upon him in a paroxysm of delight. "Where did you come from? This mornin' I prayed in my bed you might be at this picnic."

"Oh! picnic, is it? That explains why the blessed saints hurried me across the Channel. Don't throttle me, Dearlove; I'd enjoy that picnic."

He thrust his white head through her enveloping arms, and rested his firm old chin on the crook of her elbow, while she kissed him on the eyelids.

"Will nobody rescue me from this wild girl?" he demanded plaintively. "Get off, Dearlove; go and finish killing that donkey of yours."

"Oh, we're not 'xactly killin' him," she explained pleasantly, "only tryin' to make him go

on ; then he swallowed a lot of my hair, an' I really thought an' hoped he was tryin' to eat me. But, Ganpa, would you mind pullin' down my eyebrows ? ”

“ Eh ? ” inquired Ganpa blankly ; “ pull down how much ? ”

“ I rather think my eyebrows must be up among the roots of my hair,” insisted Dearlove, with a hideous contortion of her features, as she felt along over her forehead. “ He did pull most awful hard.”

“ Leave them be ! leave them be ! ” urged Chris exhaustedly ; “ they'll come down by-and-by, when they feel it's safe, Dearlove.”

He turned to Ganpa with a quizzical look.

“ And where are you off to, all by your own lone ? ”

“ Somewhere—unknown, with my family, picnicing,” meekly returned Ganpa. “ Mamie, I think I will drive with you, and send this equipage back.” He got out and dismissed the chair, greatly to Dearlove's regret, she having in that brief space of time managed to become quite intimate with both pony and driver.

“ I didn't know where you might have gone to,” explained Ganpa, as he got into the victoria. “ I came over from St. Malo, by the boat, just in time to see you depart. I wouldn't have missed

seeing Chris push Sambo up hill for anything you might have given me. All right now, driver, go on."

Chris and Dearlove had not waited ; they went on to the guard-room for Reggie, galloping Sambo up the hard barrack square as if he were racing. He was "behavin' like an angel now," as his mistress expressed it, and she was, on the whole, pleased they had not dynamited or lyddited him.

She darted into the dark room, and demanded loudly if Master Reggie were there.

He was sitting with his back to the window, as if fearing to face it, his delicate face pinched and wan with hope deferred.

Sambo's performances had wasted half an hour ; in that half-hour the boy had gone down into those impossible depths of despair and suffering that are known only to such souls as his. He thought the friends of yesterday, those incredibly charming lovely people, had forgotten him, or perhaps were only playing with him, and had never meant anything. It was impossible, he assured himself, that such people—such happy, beautiful people—could really want him.

The utter depression, the humiliation that was so ready to devour him at any opportunity, was writ large in every despondent line of his little wasted figure. His eyes looked out at Dearlove

preternaturally large and sorrowful as the wide ocean on a rainy day.

He held out his hand mutely, while Dearlove poured out a dramatic account of the iniquity of Sambo, and her narrow escape in the barrack square. Patrick, who was filling a huge blotting-pad with nice pink blotting paper, listened with a cavernous smile, and snatching Reggie off the bench, when she finished, wagged a finger at him admonishingly.

"Didn't I tell ye somethin' had kep' them?" he asked reproachfully. "Sure, patience is a fine practice, Master Reggie, so it is."

"Hallo! how are you, old man? Pretty fit, eh?" Chris took him out of Patrick's arms while he spoke, and set him carefully on the comfortably padded saddle in which Dearlove had learnt to ride. Dearlove had insisted upon riding astride, so it was a boy's saddle, bright tan leather covered with stitchery, such as little boys love. Reggie sat into it with a sense of dreamlike security.

But he was still dumb; he had a horrible choked feeling that would not go, and which forbade speech. Though he tried it again and again, no words would come. Dearlove meanwhile whirled round him excitedly, in a manner calculated to destroy the nerves of any decently

educated donkey. Fortunately Sambo was used to her.

"The bathing dress!" she cried, flourishing her arms wildly. "Chris, did you ask Patrick for the bathing things?"

Patrick saluted again, and stood mechanically to attention.

"Has he got any bathing things?" asked Chris. "We are all going in before lunch. I will take care of him, Paddy; you may trust me."

Patrick shook his head hopelessly.

"Sure I never dared to put him in, though he might have been dipped on the flow when he was born, he's that fond of it," he said quietly. "An' as for trustin', sir, I know them God puts the good into, as the divil puts the bad intil others. I'd trust ye with my own soul."

"Well, I got him something to bathe in, and I think a dip will do him good. His mother will not object, Paddy?"

"His mother!—object! God save us! That is, no, sir; I don't think she would;" and, murmuring something under his breath, Patrick saluted once more, and stood back to let the donkey pass.

"We'll bring him back safe," promised Dearlove cheerfully; "we'll take such care of him. Good-bye, Paddy."

Patrick smiled at her, as he brought down the back of his hand from his cap brim. Patrick Quin had a most expressive smile ; there was a something in it that kept Dearlove looking back at him over her shoulder till he was lost in the gloom of the guard-room.

On the narrow white winding road, between the rose and honeysuckle garlanded hedges, Reggie suddenly put out a hand, transparent and white as eggshell china. "Would you mind," he appealed to Chris huskily, "coming a little nearer—and you, Dearlove. When you didn't come I began to think it was just a dream out of a fairy book, and you had all gone back into it. Please let me touch you, just to make sure."

Dearlove put one of his tiny feet into a stirrup with great tenderness, patting him afterwards on the leg as if half afraid he might break beneath her touch. Chris looked down upon him with a smile, quizzically reassuring, an odd expression in his bright grey eyes.

"Keep a tight hold over that fiery steed," he advised, laying a big hand for an instant over the fragile fingers clutching nervously at the reins. "Sambo is a Tartar. His name ought to be Togo ; you never know where you'll find him."

"Oh yes !" hastened Reggie, flushing bril-

liantly ; " I can hold him, Chris. I'm awfully strong in the hands."

He soon forgot his confusion, and all the ordeal of the long wait, in the joy of riding down the long lovely road, with its ever-recurring glimpses of the sea, and the chatter of Dearlove, now on one side, now on the other, intent on the mass of wild flowers along the narrow water-way which edges many a Guernsey road. She knew all their names, and could tell Reggie all their classes and family.

"Some boys despise botany," she declared dispassionately ; " they think it's silly ; but you don't know what a lot of different ways God can make things till you begin to learn about flowers. He must have taken an awful long time to think them all out ; I rather wonder He didn't make them bite—an' I do wish He had made some that could bark."

Reggie gazed at her in speechless wonder and surprise. This was evidently a feature in flowers he had never contemplated.

Dearlove meanwhile went calmly on.

"Some children don't really love flowers," she expounded ; " they just pull them an' throw them away. I saw a girl at the hotel ; she had a great bunch of horned poppies, an' sea-pinks, an' she threw them out in the dust for the trams an'

things to run over. She just picked them because they were so sweet and pretty. But if they could have barked or bit, she wouldn't ; if you really, honour brightly, love things, you couldn't throw them out to die. I know the flowers feel it : the bees told me."

"A flower that could bark," mused Chris, pausing to put a grass-stalk up his old pipe stem to make it draw, "wouldn't be a bad idea, but it would cause a slump in watch-dogs, Dearlove."

"What's a slump ? " she inquired curiously.

"A slump is—er—a slump."

"I don't understand a bit better," complained Dearlove expressively.

"It means—er—falling down, or something," explained Chris.

"Oh," she scoffed, "is that all ? Dogs don't mind falling down, even letting you sit on them."

"No," agreed Chris meekly, as if congratulating himself on something, "of course not."

Sambo chose this moment to stop for a brief browse on the wayside. After considerable persuasion, he consented to move on again, and the new species of flower was forgotten for the time, greatly to Reggie's sorrow.

At length they reached the bay, and Sambo, being guided slowly across the shingle to the white sands, was relieved of his burden, and tethered

among the luscious green grass along the water-lane. Then Reggie was introduced to Ganpa, who looked down on the fragile, delicate little figure, in its immaculately clean and threadbare clothes, with a calculating eye. Ganpa had a way of sizing people up that was the result of long and arduous days in command of strange men under strange suns. When Reggie's sad violet orbs were lifted to his, he suddenly bent to him with a delightful smile, and taking the snowflake of a hand in his, he welcomed him to the Make-Believe with the courtesy of some old fairy prince.

"So you are all going out to bathe?" he said, still smiling on the little lad. "Can you swim, Cousin Reggie?"

The lad shook his head. "No," he answered with his wistful smile, a smile that seemed always to deprecate censure, sadder than any tears; "I think perhaps Paddy was afraid to teach me."

"Chris will teach you," promised Dearlove quickly. "You'll learn very quick with him. He will hold you up. At first you will feel like a frog; but it's awful fun! Quick, quick! I'm so hungry."

She disappeared into a tent with Mamie, and was almost immediately out in the sea, plunging and gambolling like a mermaid. Chris came out from his tent presently with a tiny scarlet-clad figure in his arms, that looked no bigger than a

baby. The thinness of the tiny limbs ; the fine small bones showing in the feet and hands, the wasted little body, had fairly made his heart ache.

But Chris had a theory already about this crippled little boy, whom he had seen but for the third time that day. He was going to put that theory to the test. Reggie attracted him strangely, he knew not exactly why. Perhaps it was that the pitiful bravery of the little soul in the deformed body, the beauty of his face, of the wonderful pure spirit that glowed in the great eyes. Whatever it was, Chris, big, strong, the quintessence of courage and manliness, yearned over him, and longed to strengthen and straighten him. Physically and mentally, Dearlove had shown him a way. He was going to follow it.

Dearlove was making splash and noise enough for half a dozen. She loved the sea, and was as much at home in it as on dry land ; she swam and dived and turned turtle like a fish, enjoying herself hugely.

Chris stood away from all this, with the little lad in his arms, his eyes on Reggie's face. Reggie lay looking outwards, as a baby might have done, quite still. A great green roller was coming down on them dimpling and curling. Chris waited till it was licking up around them, then stood like

a rock with the advancing wall of clear chryso-phraze swelled out between the distant sky and the shore, whispering around them.

With a little shudder Reggie drew back away from it, then almost involuntarily turned again, and with a strange happy little sound bent forward eagerly as if to meet it. It reached up and enveloped him, caressing his marred outlines, drawing over him with a swift, sweet touch, salt and keen and clear, then swept curling shorewards on.

Reggie lay silent, with the salt drops hanging from his black lashes, a wondering rapturous expression on his thin face.

"I always wanted that," he murmured quietly; then looking up suddenly at Chris, he went on: "I used to look down on the sea and think it was calling me—calling, calling. I always seemed to be stretching to it for comfort, and it wanted to comfort me, but I couldn't get near enough."

He was silent for a moment, then looked up again.

"You know, Chris," he said, gravely shy, "the sea kissed me. I have dreamt of somebody kissing me like that—very sweet and cool—and leaving a sort of peace. I never was happy like this before."

"But you will many times again," promised

Chris quietly ; “ and now, Reggie, I want you to try and move your arms like this, and your legs—so! This is a lesson in swimming. Look at Dearlove ; I want you to be able to go through the water like that.”

CHAPTER VI

A BIRD WITH A BROKEN WING

GANPA settled himself on the white sand with a gay cushion at his back, and took off his wideawake. It was not till Ganpa removed his head covering that one saw the extraordinary beauty of his brow and eyes.

They were eagle eyes, flashing under a thatch of thick silvery hair that had once been jet black, and they dreadfully disconcerted people who did not know him. Ganpa was, in fact, a terrible humbug ; he made people believe him hard as adamant, inflexibly stern. His high Roman features gave him an air of formidable aloofness, while his heart was as easily touched and tender as that of Chris or Mamie. Little children, sick and sorry folks, soon found him out, but the majority were afraid of him. Chris and he were very much alike in all ways, only that Chris being on good terms with all the world attracted it unconsciously to him, smiling as it came, in

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response to the smile he gave, while Ganpa waited desiring to be better acquainted before he made up his mind.

"And who," he asked of Nesta, sitting by him, her long blonde hair spread over her shoulders to dry in the golden sun, "is the little gentleman with the hungry soul? The crooked genius with such capacity for self-torment?"

Nesta's calm eyes, turquoise blue in their depths, like far-off hills against a rainy sky, followed Chris as he guided Reggie's struggling limbs in the shallow wave. "He is one of Dearlove's adoptions," she smiled. "Poor dear little soul—a most sweet little nature, Ganpa, and suffering—oh dear!"

She sighed pityingly, and shook her wet hair.

Ganpa nodded emphatically. "Suffering, yes," he returned briefly; "the worst of all kinds, Nesta, complicated by Genius. Who is he?"

"I wish I knew," sighed Nesta regretfully; "I fear a superfluous child. We saw the mother—a fine lady, Ganpa, all expensive chifions and costly jewellery, while our little man's clothes are hardly holding together. Unloved and neglected, Dearlove took him into the Make-Believe, and we asked no questions; they might be awkward."

"Yes! yes!" agreed Ganpa thoughtfully. "Odd thing! He seems as familiar to me as my-

self—there is something—has he ever mentioned his people at all ? ”

“ Never ; but then we have only had him three times. Dearlove usually monopolizes the conversation. However, he seems content to listen, and looks so happy that my heart fairly aches for the times he is not with us.”

“ Dear ! dear ! ” murmured Ganpa softly under his breath, “ that’s bad ! I wonder now, is it wise of Chris to attempt swimming ? The child seems to possess so small a store of vitality.”

“ Chris thinks he has a tremendous stock of will power. The little body is all will. He would have larger interests if he could move about more. If he learns to swim, he will learn to walk with more ease and have more self-confidence. That is what I think he lacks.”

“ Well,” mused Ganpa, “ if anybody can find the way to helping him, that one will be Chris. He has a wonderful way with the bairns, Nesta.”

Nesta’s eyes grew suddenly brilliant, and she sighed again ; her soft white arms, that ached so for every child she saw, had never held one of her own. She rose, as Chris came up out of the sea, carrying Reggie to the tent, and began to unpack the luncheon baskets.

Laying the cloth was a great business. Reggie was placed in a cosy nest of cushions beside

Ganpa, radiant and braced by his contact with the sea, while Dearlove and Chris assisted Nesta.

They laid it so that there was no other way to get across save by skipping over, an accident that pleased Dearlove more than anything else could have done. The number of times she arrived flying across on the other side, with every imaginable kind of thing in her hands, would have been quite creditable to a professional acrobat. There had to be decorations, too, so she tore up the cliff and returned with her hands full of purple heather and yellow loosestrife for the adornment of the feast.

She then proposed to sing grace, so as to economize time, and ordered everybody to begin the instant she had finished her pious exercises.

Finally, she skipped across the cloth and seated herself with an exclamation of devout thankfulness beside Reggie.

Reggie thought he had never seen anything so beautiful as this banquet in the open air. It was like a feast in Fairyland, which country the lonely boy knew well. They were such picture people too! The sheer personal beauty of them all was a joy he never forgot for one moment. There were times when he found it difficult to convince himself he was not dreaming. Like many

of his temperament, his dreams were always lovely, and singularly vivid. He had had visions in the summer nights as life-like as this, but he did not love all the inhabitants of them as he loved these five strangers—and that was the most extraordinary part of it all—for Reggie did not feel strange with them, nor recognize their strangeness.

All the warmth and sunshine in a naturally warm and happy soul awoke in him at the sound of Dearlove's quaint sayings, and the sight of her odd original ways. But it was the worship of an intensely deep poetical and spiritual nature that turned to Chris. Chris was an unending fascination to every child of his acquaintance. Little boys and girls alike adored him. To this child he was as one of the immortals. Like one of the heroes of old time, he read about in the shabby-backed old book, his constant companion, which recited the dealings of the gods with men.

There was something so large in him, and wide and generous, so unlike any other he had ever known, that the maimed little genius fell down at Chris's feet, and worshipped him with a satisfied and yet incredulous joy. He had been so lonely—so cut off from all his kind—so hungry and longing—and here all at once he had a friend

splendid and great, such as the most fortunate of boys would have envied.

And then there were Dearlove, and Nesta, and Mamie—and Ganpa! Reggie feared, in odd breathless intervals, that he would presently wake up.

“Can you manage a whole bird, Cousin Reggie?” demanded Ganpa jokingly.

The boy flushed at his words, and raised two eyes full of a boundless gratitude that Ganpa felt himself wincing under it. What life had this little boy lived that he should be so happy in the possession of ordinary commonplaces?

“No, thank you, Mr.—” Reggie paused faltering and smiled up at him.

“Tut! tut!” Ganpa raised the carving fork with a fine assumption of indignation. “What’s this? Are you repudiating me? Do you want to put me out of the Make-Believe? Let me tell you, young man, I’m not going to stand that; I’m Ganpa.”

“Thank you,” hastened Reggie. “Oh, I’m quite awfully glad you’ll let me pretend with you too. Isn’t it charmin’? I didn’t know one could be so happy!” He gazed round them rapturously with shining eyes. “It’s like bein’ in a book—especially Dearlove.”

“Oh, yes, of course,” assented Ganpa. “Dear-

love is the mistress of conspirators. She lures us on. D'ye mean to eat all that crayfish, young woman ? ”

“ I was only wondering,” began Dearlove dreamily, “ what it is like to have so many arms an’ legs. I wonder if he could be really quite happy inside ? ”

“ The question is,” interrupted Chris emphatically, “ not if *he* was happy in his inside, but if we shall be subsequently. Ganpa give Reggie some Burgundy. He is a trifle too blue.”

“ Ganpa,” added Dearlove, still thoughtfully contemplating the crayfish, “ when this feast is over, we’re goin’ to give you a divertissement.”

“ Indeed,” inquired Ganpa, with great interest, “ I’m glad of that. I missed the divertissements, Dearlove, more than I can say.”

“ Well, you know,” replied Dearlove philosophically, “ you would go away all by your own self. I told you, you couldn’t be happy.”

“ And you were right, as usual,” he conceded ; “ I was not—not at all ! ”

The feast ended—to Reggie’s sorrow ; he grudged Time every moment of that day, and Time seemed snatching them away before they were sped. Dearlove took a plate, and proceeded industriously to flatten the sand round her in an irregular circle.

This process being finished she called upon Chris to come to the *divertissement* directly.

"Dearlove!" he remonstrated indignantly, "you are breaking the commandment yourself, and know no peace till you make me do likewise."

Dearlove stood patiently with the plate in her hand, her frock covered with sand, awaiting an explanation.

"What commandment?" she questioned suspiciously.

"After dinner, sit awhile," quoted Chris languidly. "This has not been dinner, but it might have been."

"I never saw that among the Commandments," decided Dearlove practically; "I think you must have made it up; besides, as you say, it isn't dinner."

"Gave yourself away that time," criticised Ganpa genially. "Go to Chris!"

"This *divertissement*," announced Dearlove, with a superior air, and a very fine accent, "is called 'The Young May Moon is Beaming, Love.' It is a song and dance. I'm goin' to be the song an' dance, an' Chris will be the moon."

"Eh?" demanded Chris incredulously, "the moon! Do mine ears deceive me?"

"Of course they don't," retorted Dearlove magnificently. "You must beam, like this——"

Dearlove has a short upper lip, and a lower one, as if some bee had newly stung it, but she can somehow manage to make them go farther than if they were of the most generous proportions. They seemed to vanish behind her ears.

Her audience shrieked simultaneously in horror, the effect was of such blood-curdling character.

She was both hurt and indignant.

"It's only a beam," she protested. "I'm sure I can't see why you don't admire it. Of course, it isn't easy to be the moon, because it never says anything. Now, if I were a dog—I can bark most beautifully. When we have plays at school, I have always to go behind the scenes; I am quite the best barker. Chris, are you comin'?"

Chris delivered himself over to her, and was posed carefully with his face to the audience and his back to the sun.

"Beam!" she commanded energetically, and began the dance, which was a dance of a most surprising description, requiring tremendous agility, but was graceful withal.

The first verse was loudly acclaimed, but in the middle of the second she paused unexpectedly to express extreme dissatisfaction with the moon.

"You're not beamin' enough," she complained.

"Well, I'm blest!" ejaculated Chris hotly.

"Why, I'm beaming like one o'clock. Fit to bust myself!"

"Well, you're not shiny enough, then," objected his task-mistress. "Wait till I see the back of you." She walked round, and contemplated his wide shoulders with an access of discontent. "No," she went on, "you're not actin' it right. If people came along here, they would hardly know you were a moon unless you 'xplained to them. You ought to be all swimmy an' white."

"Swimmy and white!" echoed Chris blankly. "My young friend, this show is off. I chuck the rôle. Get another moon, madam! I cannot undertake to beam any better."

"Very well," agreed Dearlove with great cheerfulness. "I'll be the moon myself, an' you can be the song an' dance. But I rather think I'd like a bundle of sticks."

"A good moon," remarked Chris sententiously, "needs no bush. I did without them."

Dearlove ignored the claim set forth in this remark, and they set out together to collect the stage property she considered essential to a good rendering of the part.

Apparently they forgot what they wanted, for presently Dearlove came back very slowly, while Chris talked to her quietly, looking down into her hands. She was holding her palms together and

in them lay a little dead wren. She dropped on her knees between Ganpa and Reggie.

"See," she said solemnly, "the life has gone out of this dear little bird."

Reggie lifted the exquisite wing feather across a transparent forefinger, his lips quivering.

"It had a broken wing, Dearlove," he whispered. "How glad the life must have been when it got out ; it must have been awful when it could not lift this body—when it was trying and trying, and couldn't——"

He looked from Ganpa, grave and intent, to Chris, regarding him with kindly question. Another question—hungry and eager in his brilliant eyes.

"Where did it go to, that life ?" he entreated quickly, his lips suddenly dry. "Tell me—where to ?"

The urgency in his voice and gaze did not seem to affect Dearlove. Naturally Reggie wanted to know where the little innocent life had gone. And Dearlove knew.

"Straight to God," she said instantly, "and Our Little Lord met it on the way. I know what He said : 'Oh, little Life ; I am so glad you have come back to Me !' You see, it was awfully frightened when it lay among the heather with the broken wing and couldn't fly ; so it just went quickly to God, and wasn't afraid any more."

Reggie sat with one hand pressed down on the sand, his burning eyes fixed on her downcast face, as she stroked the dead wren with tender finger.

When she ceased, he looked round, with that poignant questioning, still unsatisfied and keen in his gaze.

"Is it true?" he panted. "Chris, is that real? Do stop the Make-Believe for one moment till you answer me. Is there a Little Lord who is glad of broken things?"

"There is a Little Lord," said Chris slowly and reverently, "and all broken, sick, and suffering things find comfort in Him, and safety, Reggie."

The boy heaved a long tremulous sigh, and his lips moved in silence as he leaned back among the cushions exhaustedly.

"I wanted to know," he whispered faintly; "it sounded so much too good."

"And so," resumed Dearlove dreamily, as if the interruption had not taken place, "the little Life is away with Our Lord, an' Chris an' Reggie an' me will put the little dead part it left behind into the earth in a nice soft hiding-place, an' it will grow into flowers an' grass. The little short feathers will be grass, an' the wing feathers will be harebells, an' they will dance in the sun when the wind blows off the sea an' forget all the fright

they once had, an' be so happy. Reggie, won't that be lovely ? ”

“ Yes,” agreed Reggie weakly ; “ but, oh ! I wish it hadn't a broken wing.”

Chris carried him some way up the cliff, and set him down in the heather, while Dearlove scraped a shallow hole with a spoon.

“ My little cousin,” began Chris tenderly, “ you must not think so much of the broken wing ; it is the universal lot ; we are all crippled somehow, some one way, some another, else we should be content and find our heaven here. And among us the greatest is he who shows his fellow-cripples what great things can be done despite the broken wing—the suffering of mind or body. A time will come when the shattered pinion will no longer matter, and the life will go forth, glorious, beautiful and strong, to rejoice happily in its freedom.”

“ You think that ? ” The crooked little figure bent forward eagerly, the great eyes seeking with a pain as old as the everlasting hills.

“ And I think that,” returned Chris softly ; “ I *must* think that, Reggie ; we all must, else this Vasty Plan crumbles and is chaos. Try to see the Plan, which compensates us for the broken wing. Mine, Reggie, as well as yours—that is a secret I have told you, little cousin, so that you may understand. For my broken pinion

pains me at times worse than a healing wound. Ganpa has his, Mamie's bleeds beneath the feathers ; Nesta—Nesta has hers too——."

Reggie slipped a thin hand into that of his friend.

" I will never mind again," he said quickly, with a downward curve of his sensitive lips. " I will bear it now, Chris, like you."

" No, no," said Chris softly, " take a better example than I am. Dearlove's Little Lord suffered greatly ; He will give you courage, and strength, and hope. If you would be intimate friends with Him, Reggie, He will mend that broken wing."

" Reggie !" called Dearlove, " come an' lay the little bird in his mossy bed ; I have made it so soft and sweet."

CHAPTER VII

WITH THE BROKEN WING

AFTER many sunny morning pilgrimages in company, Ganpa and Nesta found a little house that pleased them on the crest of the tall hill overlooking the Museum, with the Candie Gardens stretched on its smiling slope, and all the quaint irregularly piled old houses climbing helter-skelter up to them.

Looking farther, there was the line of quays, with their clustering little ships; the fishing boats, with their brown sails hanging untidily against the tall masts; the dainty yachts rocking placidly on the tide. And beyond the frowning walls of Castle Cornet, the radiant shores of Herm temptingly near on the blueness of the sea, Sark and Jersey looming faint and far and showing like a cloud on the horizon line the shadowy coast of France.

They could sit on the lawn, in the pleasant rose and carnation filled garden before the long windows, and watch the changing face of ocean,

dimpling from sapphire to purple in the sun—now black with the little winds of summer, now white with the cloud-reflections, as they sailed low in the skies.

There are no noises in Guernsey to distract the listening ear.

The rhythm of the Scandinavian chanties, the rush of the clanking windlass, or the whistle of some white yacht gliding to or from its moorings in the quiet harbour, the bell of the morning or evening boat, do not count for much.

Even the cry of the newspaper boys is lost in the placid quiet of the Guernsey air. It does not irritate, as it does in London, where it must needs rise above the thunder of the traffic. It refines itself in St. Peter Port to a gentle hint of the world beyond, in which you need not necessarily take an overwhelming interest, but of whose doings one reads with a qualified and compassionate toleration.

There are no trains—no motors—yet. If there were, I doubt if the paternal policemen would allow a speed exceeding five miles an hour; if the motors desired more, the which I think would be impossible, since in Guernsey one never desires speed of any sort.

Nobody hurries there; why should one? There is absolutely nothing to hasten for. True,

there is a telephone ; but haply one gets through, and haply one does not. It needs not disturb the universal calm, since it never has anything exciting to remark upon.

The Guernsey folks use the telephone for ordering the dinner—a right and proper use for it. They are wise, and refuse to allow it to dominate existence. Once the telephone is master, farewell to peace ; it becomes a curse, a tyrant. So in the tall old house found by Ganpa and Nesta, there were no noises, only the wind in the elms behind it, the dim chanties from the quays, and the wash of the sucking ebb, or the whisper of the flowing tide.

Dearlove, after exploring it from garret to cellar, and investigating its little steps up to rooms, and its little steps down to rooms, its passages that ended in cupboards, and its low-browed garrets, decided it would do, and went out to find how the garden suited her.

In company with Chris she searched its every corner, and considered it “ jolly decent ” ; then returned to the long narrow lawn in front of the house, to watch for Reggie, who was expected to tea.

There was a low granite wall running along the bottom of this narrow garden, mossy on top. Dearlove investigated the moss, finding it very

like green velvet, with tiny thread-like stalks of brown-red, upholding infinitesimal cups in the sun ; a satisfactory wall altogether. She was absorbed in contemplation of a wandering ant among the ruddy stalks, when she suddenly saw a surprising spectacle on the road below. She sprang up and raced towards the little veranda, where Chris was reading the papers in a wicker chair.

"Chris !" she cried, "you couldn't believe it. Reggie is walkin' up the hill !"

"Walking !" repeated Chris. "Are you sure ?"

"Well, come and see," was her admonition. Only seeing would have convinced herself of such an astounding fact.

Chris heaved himself out of the low chair, and went to the wall, leaning over with his big brown hand shading his eyes from the glare on the white road.

There, incredible as it seemed, the little lad was painfully and slowly climbing up to them. In his mind's eye, Chris could see the labouring chest, the fine lips set hard with determination to conquer the crippled body—could hear the panting breath. Chris thrust his hands deep in the pockets of his loose coat, and whistled softly. Reggie would halt now and again, with an upward glance at Patrick Quin, marching jocularly beside him, and fan his little white

face with the brim of the shabby straw hat.

Chris wondered what he might be saying at those times, and what it was Patrick said in reply.

Mamie came noiselessly across the gay lawn to the wall, and looked down at them.

"The broken wing will hardly matter, Chris," she said softly. "I think our little new cousin will soar in spite of it."

"Yes!" responded Chris briefly, "he's made of the right stuff; but it hurts him, Mamie—badly!"

"Not so badly as it has done," she murmured absorbedly; "he has now something to soar to."

Chris nodded silently, his eyes fixed on the little stooping figure. Suddenly Dearlove shot out from the gate below them, and darted down the road.

She raced up to Reggie, and flung her arms round him.

"Such a long day!" she cried, giving him an affectionate hug and releasing him. "Come along. Everybody's waitin' for you. Hallo, Paddy!"

"Hallo to you, miss," returned Paddy respectfully, his eyes gleaming with satisfaction as he noted her arm at Reggie's shoulders, drawing

him gently up. "This is a great day for Ireland, miss."

"But why?" questioned Dearlove with an accent of surprise.

"'Tis the first time Master Reggie has taken a walk by himself, an' not a han' or foot to help him but his own. Himself will be the champion walker soon."

Paddy's tone was jocular, but his eye had an anxious glint in it.

"I was sayin', miss," he went on, "that 'tis well to creep a bit before walkin'. A yard or so at a time an' no harm done. Divil a care he cares for wearin' the roads out. Small blame on him if he was a bit done, an' would consint to a fella carryin' him a while."

"No, no, Paddy," remonstrated Reggie hastily, "if I can get on in the water, why shouldn't I on land?"

"There are no hills in the water, young Hercules!" laughed Chris, coming up in time to hear this remark, "and it is as well to begin on the level."

Without more ado he lifted the child, and they came slowly up together.

"I thought," panted Reggie, "it was never going to be four o'clock. Hasn't it been an awfully long day?"

"Rather," agreed Dearlove wisely. "I went to church this morning."

"It is hot, isn't it?" asked Reggie.

"The only tolerable place," conceded Chris, "is the place where Dooley spent the night in the villa."

"Dooley spent the night in the bath, you know," explained Dearlove, shaking back her hair. "It was cool. I suppose there wasn't much room in the villa."

"Suppose," suggested Chris to her, as they arrived at the garden gate, "you take Paddy round to the kitchen, and introduce him to Barbara and Sallie. They expect you, Paddy; I hope you will enjoy your tea."

Paddy saluted smilingly, and disappeared round the veranda at Dearlove's heels. Chris went slowly up the wide grey stone steps, and set his burden down in the wicker chair.

Reggie smiled shyly into his grave face.

"Chris, are you pleased?" he asked. "I walked."

"Good man!" admonished Chris, with a smile in return, "but you must go slow, Reggie. You must go slow if the pace is to last."

Mamie patted the cushions round him, and propped his narrow feet on a tuffet. "We want you to grow very strong," she added, "so

you must take care. "Don't begin by climbing hills, Reggie; I feel quite out of breath when I get up here."

"Anyhow, I did it," urged Reggie in great satisfaction. "I wouldn't have believed I could have walked like that."

"No, nor I," laughed Mamie. "You did surprise us!"

"Did I?" He echoed the laugh with a proud and happy tone, smoothing the gay silk of the cushion at his elbow with an unconscious joy in its brightness. The happiness in his voice overflowed to his eyes, and translated him into absolute beauty.

"I lay awake and thought about coming all the night," he went on, the happiness lilting through his words. "The thought of it was like a voice singing. Do you know when you feel things so much that you can hear them?"

Mamie seemed astonished, but she nodded in affirmation.

"I lay awake," he repeated irrelevantly; "it was a green dawn."

"Yes," she assented quietly, "I saw it too; it reminded me of a song, finished before it was half begun. What did it make you think of, Reggie?"

His eyes met the clear sadness of her own, and

he replied instantly, "Of Dearlove, and Nesta—and *you*. It was so beautiful, and I had not enough of it."

"Ho! ho!" commented Ganpa, coming behind him with Dearlove at his coat tails. "What's this? Compliments? Fie! Reggie, never condescend to flattering a woman; once you begin you must keep it up. Go away, young person!" he added severely to Dearlove. "We are not speaking. Leave my coat tail be."

"Poof!" remarked Dearlove, "you are speaking. You can't keep it up any longer, Ganpa, it's tea-time."

Ganpa pulled out his watch with an incredulous eye.

"Why, so it is!" he exclaimed, with an air of immense relief. "Well, I suppose we must make it up! But you understand, Dearlove."

"Course I do. Reggie, you see, it is like this: Ganpa an' me used to have simply awful fights, an' we found it so inconvenient about meal times, because we always forgot we weren't speakin', an' so we had no proper fallin' in again. So we 'rranged that we'd only fall out from one meal time to another, so's always to be speakin' when it was lunch, or tea, or dinner. I was pretty bad to-day, Reggie."

Ganpa shook his white head with a grave and

sorrowful air. "You were," he consented, "very bad! and in church too."

Dearlove sighed, and sat down on the grass facing the wicker chair, cross-legged, holding on to her ankles, and shook her brown mane in imitation of her grandfather.

"If you're born likin' to be bad," she expounded despairingly, "you simply can't help it. But I was good once, Ganpa; don't forget."

"Well, once is not often," argued Ganpa. "I certainly might remember it."

"Once," resumed Dearlove with a retrospective air, "I was a Pink Ribbon. You can't get a pink ribbon unless you're quite good."

"What I would like to know," interjected Chris inquiringly, "is how you lost that pink ribbon, and your aggressively virtuous aspect at the same time, and I have certain recollections. But stay yourself with cakes, Dearlove; have some tea to strengthen you, then tell us all about it. There is nothing cheers me so much as the account of some other Johnnie's misfortunes."

Nesta came out, dropping a white hand on Reggie's fair curls as she passed to her seat by the tea table, and began pouring out the tea.

"Do tell us," she urged encouragingly; "I often wondered about that ribbon."

"It was at the Convent," began Dearlove with

an enjoyable dismalness, "last term. I was simply dreadfully good. I never did a single thing I wanted to for eight weeks." She paused to groan over the memory. "Then I had to go on bein' quite good for another eight weeks. But I didn't. One day comin' downstairs I slid on the banisters. I 'xplained to the nun that saw me that I always came down like that at home, so's to save time. You know it is quicker."

She rubbed her nose meditatively, and went on, "But the Rev. Mother took away my ribbon just the same. Chris said they ought to give it back to me if I went up the banister again; but they wouldn't, because, you see, another girl might have done it an' gone over—of course the marble is hard—an' she might get killed. They all thought I would be.

"Then I went out to recreation, an' under a tree there was a nun I love most dearly doin' her meditation, an' I climbed up the tree, just to s'prise her; but I slipped an' fell right down on the top of her head. She was most awfully frightened an' flat as anything. I didn't mean to drop on her like that; my belt caught—an' I know it's most uncharitable to laugh, but I laughed like—like anything.

"So I was sent back to Rev. Mother, but when I was goin' up to tell, one of the girls was practisin'

in a cell, an' I took her fiddle an' danced an' sang, so all the files turned goin' in to chapel an' looked at me ; so I was put among the Penitents.

"All the nice girls are in the Penitents, an' nobody 'xpects you to be good. I rather like bein' there. You can be as bad as you like."

Dearlove paused and gazed around her little circle of listeners with a chastened enjoyment in the recollection.

"I was there a week," she sighed regretfully. "I did enjoy myself ! Then one night I went to bed an' I dreamed the Devil came through the refectory wall, an' simply swooped on me.

"But I wasn't goin' off with him when it was only a mistake, an' I never meant to flatten dear Mother Francis Sales' nose or anything. So I gave him a frightful slap on the cheek an' he went back into the wall, an' stuck half way, makin' simply awful faces at me.

"I was frightened ! Then I woke up an' 'samined my conscience, but I hadn't been doin' any piticular sins 'xcept these I've been tellin' you. Then I heard a frightful row in the next dormitory, an' it was one of the Blue Ribbons. She dreamt the Devil had come after her with a pitchfork. So you see it was another mistake, an' it wasn't me after all."

CHAPTER IV

"The fact," suggested Mrs. "your re-
sponse to the point I mentioned."

"I am inclined to believe that it is
natural because I believe he is good as I

believe." She continued hastily
"because your method," declared George

"because you use I put in sometimes
other things in mind of other things."

"I would be sure of the
fact that I have some."

"I suppose," considered Dearlove, "God in-
clude the miracle that in something some-
thing."

"It is not after manipulation," remarked
"still he must not shrink when you have

"I am afraid of him," remarked Dearlove
"I have played in him," remarked Dearlove

"I suppose he is used to being lonely."

"I suppose he is," agreed Chris. "that's why
I am afraid of him."

Every word the boy balanced between his
eyes and his little body rigid with attention,

strongly fascinated by this weird recital, sud-
denly caught Mamma's eye, and laughed outright.

The boy was new and strange, new but resolute.
The boy's mother approved, it reminded him of the

look in the little lad's face, as he came toiling up the hill.

"I laughed like that," announced Dearlove, "in church to-day. That's why Ganpa an' me fell out—I made him laugh too. Ganpa put half-a-crown in the plate; an' there was an old fisherman with such a funny voice, an' he put up his hand to his mouth, so I thought he was goin' to roar. But he only whispered. Then he went away an' came back with the plate full of pennies, an' 'sisted on givin' Mamie an' Ganpa change. He would only allow them to put in a penny each. So I laughed; an' there was a dear baby who would laugh, too, every time I looked at him. Reggie, do you love babies?"

The boy shrivelled up among his cushions, as the sensitive plant shrivels at a rude touch.

"Once," he stammered, "I talked to a baby—a little girl; she had hair like the corn when it is ripe. I was lying among the corn listening to a lark; it was very high away up, and the corn was full of poppies. When it waved in the wind it whispered, and you could see the sea through it, far away down. I showed it to the little girl and she was pleased. But she wanted something, and I couldn't understand. I got up to take her back wherever she had come from. When I got up she cried. Her brothers and sisters were play-

"It was then," suggested Chris, "you returned to the paths of righteousness?"

She nodded with her mouth full of cake.

"I thought perhaps I'd better be as good as I could again," she conceded austere.

"I perceive your method," declared Ganpa wisely. "Dearlove, you take it out in quantities—so much piety, so much the—er—other thing. But if I were you 'I would no be sippin' wi' the muckle deil unless ye hae a lang spune.'"

"I s'pose," considered Dearlove, "God intends the muckle deil to do somethin' sometimes."

"He is not often unemployed," remarked Chris. "Still, he must feel slack when you have the pious fit on, Dearlove."

"I once prayed for him," remarked Dearlove thoughtfully, then added with slow philosophy, "but I s'pose he's used to bein' lonely."

"I suppose he is," agreed Chris, "that's why he shuns society."

Reggie, who had been sitting forward intent on every word, the cup balanced between his fragile hands, his little body rigid with attention, seemingly fascinated by this weird recital, suddenly caught Mamie's eye, and laughed outright.

The ring was new and strange, low but resolute. Chris nodded approval; it reminded him of the

look in the little lad's face, as he came toiling up the hill.

"I laughed like that," announced Dearlove, 'in church to-day. That's why Ganpa an' me fell out—I made him laugh too. Ganpa put half-a-crown in the plate; an' there was an old fisherman with such a funny voice, an' he put up his hand to his mouth, so I thought he was goin' to roar. But he only whispered. Then he went away an' came back with the plate full of pennies, an' 'sisted on givin' Mamie an' Ganpa change. He would only allow them to put in a penny each. So I laughed; an' there was a dear baby who would laugh, too, every time I looked at him. Reggie, do you love babies?"

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ing in the road. She cried all the time—and—and—— ” He shrank farther and farther among the cushions till he seemed all eyes, his face a curious greyish tint, his mobile lips drooping.

“ Well ? ” questioned Dearlove anxiously. “ They must have been so ’bliged to you.”

“ They threw stones at me ! ” he cried out, suddenly sitting erect, then shrinking away again, as if the confession were bitter and terrible shame.

Then he caught the expression in his hero’s eyes, and drew himself up tremulously. “ I do not mind,” he resumed hastily. “ I would not feel like that now.”

Dearlove bounded off the grass, and kissed him fervently, then fairly galloped round the lawn, her hair streaming in her flight like the trail of a comet, a haze of golden red in the sun.

She returned and threw herself against Ganpa’s knees, facing the new cousin.

“ Reggie,” she burst out enthusiastically, “ I have such a duck of a cat at home. He’s not actually a cat yet, only a sort of kitten ; his name is Smiler. An’ I have a simply lovely collie ; his name is Shuna, that is Gaelic, an’ it means Happiness. He’s an awfully happy dog ; he takes out Ganpa’s slippers an’ chews holes in them on the lawn. When you come to stay with us at Christ-

mas, he will love you ; won't he, Ganpa ? He's a most piticular dog."

"Oh, Dearlove," asked Reggie shakily, "do you think he would ?"

She nodded her head like a Chinese mandarin.

"Won't he Ganpa ? Rather !"

"I don't see," said Ganpa with a shining eye, "how he could possibly help it, Reggie. I am sure Sambo is your bond slave."

"And," added Chris cheerily, "there are quite a variety of people and creatures who will love Reggie, apart from ourselves, because everybody loves the brave."

And Reggie looked at him with eyes deeper than the sea, brimming over with gratitude and worship.

CHAPTER VIII

CRACKERS AND SQUAKS

THAT afternoon was a continuation of many other happy afternoons for Reggie. Many long dreamy days, passed within sound of the murmuring sea, in the company of his hero and Dearlove. Mamie, Nesta, and Ganpa were all beautiful accessories to his dream, but Chris was the central figure round which all revolved, with Dearlove a lesser and more lovely star in his narrow firmament.

There are people whom to know is to care little for. There is the common intimacy which breeds contempt, but with these knowledge brought only a greater love and increasing admiration.

Reggie's life had been singularly lonely. It comprised brief, transient glimpses of the brilliant and lovely woman with the cruel mouth, whom he knew was his mother. Times when he realized to the fullest extent that bitterness of soul, that

hunted fear, which beset the poetical dreaming, beauty-loving soul, pent in a weak, suffering and deformed body. Reggie in his little life had drained the cup of suffering to the uttermost dregs, because he was, as Ganpa said, a genius. True he was as yet inarticulate, but speech was coming with his new happiness. Day by day, the little girl who had adopted him into this incredibly blissful dream, this joyful Make-Believe, taught him some new word, wherewith to charm the world in days to come.

Even now he began to realize the rapture of his own thought, though he could not tell, poor little dumb poet, that it was the rapture of creation, the joy of putting forth a perfect thing.

The big kind Irishwoman, Paddy's sister, with whom he lived in the married quarters, wondered sometimes as she tucked him into his hard camp bed at the ecstatic expression on his thin features, in his limpid eyes. "He's not long for this world, God bless him!" she told Paddy gloomily. "'Tis himself hears the angels—don't I hear him talkin' to them in the dark?"

Mrs. Maguire had a good husband—his next step would be sergeant-major, and she was as proud of him, as it was possible for mortal woman to be.

But she had no children; all the love in her big Irish heart had expanded itself on the weak

crippled baby Paddy had brought to her after Spion Kop. She hated the grand lady, who came occasionally and looked with hardly concealed contempt and aversion at her darling. Hated her as the hungry heart of the woman who yearns for a child hates the other woman who has the child and neglects it. Reggie was a beloved mystery, for Paddy would never confide the boy's parentage to her. No bribe, no coaxing, would make her gigantic brother disclose whence he had come, and why he was left to such as her. Only once had Paddy given her any information concerning her nurse-child, and then he had told her Reggie was the son of his captain. How devoted he had been to that captain Mary Maguire knew well. Paddy had lifted him out of the line of fire on that last awful day on the summit of Spion Kop, and carried him, his big body a target for countless bullets, to die afterwards in the hospital tent. But on the whole Mary did not care who Reggie was, all her fear consisted in the dread of his early death, or the fine lady mother taking him away. Paddy was wont to frown fiercely at this last idea, and assuring her with some vigour that he had the papers that would prevent her doing it, if ever she tried. "Himself left the little master to me," declared Paddy, "'Kape him out of the hands av his

mother,' says he. Sure there could be nothing clearer than that."

"She's not wantin' him anyway. Don't you be fearin' that, Mary Bawn," he concluded. "She comes to see he's alive. No other reason. Oh! 'tis the could cruel heart she has! But she won't dare take him away." So far Paddy had been right. She had not taken him away or attempted it; seemingly she was satisfied in those brief side-long glances, during her visit, that Mary Bawn used her son well—that apparently was as much as she cared to know about him.

For these new rich, beautiful friends of Reggie's Mary entertained unbounded admiration—admiration which almost equalled Reggie's own. Dearlove had come to tea in her little parlour in the married quarters, had admired the bead baskets, the wool mats, the wonderful rugs, manufactured for her by her husband in the days when he was merely Corporal Maguire, and which were priceless treasures in his wife's eyes.

Dearlove thought them beautiful, and said so in her customary frank and decided fashion. She thought Mary beautiful, too, and conveyed it to her with great delicacy, delighting her the while by eating far too many buttermilk scones, spread with strawberry jam.

Mary was a little awed by Nesta and Mamie,

and assured Paddy many times that these people were quality, "an' not to be takin' liberties with them, though they were so simple an' kind."

Paddy grinned affably. He was not inclined to take liberties; no one knew better than Paddy that despite the frank kindness, the lack of all condescension, and the loose-fitting shabby garments, Ganpa and Chris were not people to be trifled with.

Paddy knew what he was dealing with, their voices would have brought him to attention had he been drugged and blind.

"Officer—men," said Paddy briefly, "an' the rale ould thing."

"The rale ould thing" had kindness as a fundamental principle in its dealings with all men.

Paddy took it as a recognition of his little charge, and quite a right and proper thing that they should be so fond of him, so tender of his strange ways and fancies. Mary Bawn bewailed her inability to understand him at all times, though like the warm-hearted romantic Celt she was, she intuitively divined that the gates so wide set for him, and such as he, were scarcely ajar to some, and hermetically sealed to most.

The Irish still cherish their old worship of the crowned bard—the bard who sat at the king's right hand, drank of his cup, ate of his bread, and

tasted food before him. It was the wonder of the world that her little crooked nurse-child should be one of the elect, should see visions and dream dreams, and be caught up in rapt ecstasies where no voice could reach.

So even then Dearlove's Make-Believe brought great content to these three simple people. The pastime of a summer holiday made some few outside it very happy.

Reggie was with them every day. Day after day of blue unclouded summer weather, with the hum of the bees on the heather, and the warm lap of the waves against the granite shore. He lay on the hillside with Chris, and revelled in the odour of tobacco smoke, rejoiced beyond all measure when he was allowed to clean the well-coloured pipe with a grass stem. Dearlove liked cleaning the pipe too, but Reggie never so much as suspected that. She gave up one of her chief pleasures very freely because she saw how much the little adopted cousin loved the performance of that simple task, the gratification it was to him that he could do something, if ever so small, for his hero.

Dearlove had a great many other "fall-back-upons;" some of these she introduced Reggie to, but he was rather fearful of them for a time. Besides Dearlove was not handicapped in any

way—she was as free to go and come as the wind, and almost as irresponsible.

But of all her qualities, perhaps it was utter unexpectedness of her which astonished Reggie most. Her odd flight from the absolutely ludicrous to weird mysticism, or a soaring piety, the extraordinary terms of familiarity on which she lived with the saints and angels, her intimacy with Him whom she always alluded to as "Our Little Lord" puzzled him strangely.

One of his mother's injunctions to Mary Bawn was a stringent command that he was to be taught "no superstitions." She hinted contemptuously that the boy's father had been a victim to superstitions, and in some way his entertainment of them had spoilt his chances in life, and incidentally hers and Reggie's. So Mary Bawn said but little to him of things in another world, fearful lest he should be reft from her before his time.

She always intended giving him instruction, but always put it tremblingly off, feeling the risk too great—it might separate them. So in that curious faith of hers, Dearlove was another mystery to Reggie, and one he never tired of probing. Never was there such a story-hungry boy, or one so eager to hear of that time when The Master walked the earth in company with His

chosen friends, and talked to them as a mortal man. But what Chris liked best in him was the keen sense of humour the little lad had hidden away behind those soulful eyes, and delicate high-bred features. His laugh was frequent now, and nearly always led the way. Chris could see the mirth bubbling in him long before any of them caught the reason, and his little low laughter was good to hear, pretty to remember. Mamie has many a reminiscence of those Guernsey days in her sketch book; Reggie in his merry moods, beautiful as an angel. The merriment was generally of Dearlove's manufacture. She loved discoursing on the subject of being grown up. "When I am grown up," was the preface to many a heated discussion between herself and Chris, that kept them all racked with laughter and surprise.

Their worlds were so different he sometimes found it no easy thing to follow her. "When I am grown up," she announced one day, stretching herself on the purple blue of the heather, with a luxurious anticipation, "I mean to have it Christmas all the year round."

"In that case," gravely considered Chris, "your suffering relations will probably light out for a foreign shore, and I shall go through the Bankruptcy Court, since I cannot live without you."

"That's the place where they ask if you have anything to declare," remarked Dearlove, with an innocent irrelevancy. "I like that sort of travelling, it's such fun pretendin' you're a smuggler bold when you've only got half a bottle. They march you into the Inspector's, Reggie, an' look in your pockets—but why will you have to go there, Chris?"

"Well, I hope it may not actually come to it," explained Chris with a lazy smile, puffing big clouds from his pipe, "but I certainly shall, my blooming rose of Guernsey, if you make me provide you with Christmas boxes all the year round."

"Oh, what a pity!" sighed Dearlove thoughtfully, "I do love the Christmas things so."

"What are the Christmas things?" asked Reggie with unconscious wistfulness.

"Well, it used to be Dan Leno an' Drury Lane, first of all." She paused and shook her head dolefully, "but he's gone to heaven. I cried like anything when I heard. I did wish I was an angel. Then I like other things."

"What things do you like best now?" questioned Chris drowsily. The murmuring of the restless sea had a remarkably soothing effect on that high purple upland among the bracken and heather.

Dearlove clasped her slim hands between her

knees, and pondered, eyes fixed on the tips of her toes, on this problem. It was something in the nature of a problem, because she was a young person of many likes.

"Things, you mean, of course—not people?" she asked at length.

"Of course," agreed Chris, blinking at her critically from under the slant of his straw hat brim.

"Well then," she began thoughtfully, "I love dogs, an' horses, an' cats, an' elephants—Oh Reggie, I want to tell you—when I was a little young girl, I used to say 'effenats.' Wasn't that 'bsurd? Oh yes, an' I love crackers."

"Dogs," commented Chris with half shut eyes, "an' hosses, an' crackers—that's what I call a sensible, right-minded, inexpensive list. Cats is dogs, an' hosses is dogs an' likewise effenats, but this ere cracker bein' a hinseck——"

"I'd like to know," cried Dearlove in wrathful tones, "how you make a cracker out to be an insect? An' I don't see why people shouldn't have Christmas twice a year anyhow, it's much more sensibler than Easter. Reggie don't you think we might have two Christmasses?"

"Of course, of course," interposed Chris hastily, with a view to mollifying her resentment, "why not twenty bloomin' Christmasses. Now Reggie

enlighten us as to your favourite tippie."

"He means," expounded Dearlove, with a little scornful touch, "what is it you like best?"

Reggie put a transparent little hand on the big man's knee, and looked at him with timid silence, his eyes eloquent with affection.

Chris put a hand over the small thin fingers and smiled from beneath the hat brim, as a kind big brother might have smiled at a little sickly one.

"You, Chris," whispered Reggie confidentially, reaching up to his ear. "But," he added hopelessly, aloud, "I love you all as a matter of fact. You are all, always in my mind, like the sea song, and the wind, and the scent of roses. You are all just like remembering music that you have only heard once. I am always trying to remember the forgotten part."

Ganpa exchanged glances with Mamie, over the top of his book, and watched the little boy's face with an expression of keen and absorbed interest. Mamie was watching him too, with a little puzzled frown between her thin brows. Ganpa and Mamie saw more of Reggie than the others; they were the lazy ones who sat buried in the heather, or in the sand, while the others climbed and fished, or explored, and it was difficult to say if he puzzled or attracted them more.

"You are surely very fond of books, Reggie?" inquired Ganpa abruptly, taking off his glasses to polish them energetically.

"Oh yes, Ganpa," Reggie hastened to say. "I love a great many books. Mary lets me read them in bed when my back is very bad at night. This is the one I love best." He drew from an inside pocket a little book bound in rich old yellow calf. The edges and back had once been exquisitely tooled, here and there a portion of the gilding that had been put in with such pains and care showed on the frayed leather. It was much mended now, the back sewn with brown thread, the corners broken, the leaves brown and thinned by frequent turning.

Chris took it and turned it over with tender fingers; he loved books, and saw this one was a never-failing friend and counsellor.

"What is it, boy?" asked Ganpa with interest.

"*Arms and the Man, I Sing!*" pronounced Chris admiringly. "Exactly the book I would have expected of you Reggie. Good man!"

Reggie replaced the book within his short jacket, with a sparkling eye.

"Books!" remarked Dearlove discontentedly. "I like books too, but don't you like *things*. Surely you do adore crackers."

Reggie coloured, laughing softly as he made his

confession, "I don't know, I never had any."

"Never had any!" Dearlove sat bolt upright as if in horror of such benighted condition. "Never had any crackers, Reggie!"

"There are people, incredible as it seems, who don't care for crackers," sighed Chris.

"They 're people like Reggie," she assured him with absolute conviction, "who never had any. Chris, he simply must have some crackers. Let's have some for tea, they have boxes an' boxes of them in the little shop past the church."

Chris sat slowly up, and abandoned all idea of a pleasant snoozing afternoon. "I might as well be tied to a lyddite bomb," he grumbled. "I never know where I'm going to be fired off to." He got up and dusted his knees gloomily. "Come along, tyrant. But mark this well, my masterful boon-companion, I will not walk back, I'm going to hire a chair; you may walk by my side and fan me with the crackers."

"Blowed if I will," responded Dearlove energetically. "I'll come in the chair too."

Chris paused and looked down on her reprov-
ingly. Her family emitted a chorus of horrified
"Oh's."

"What is it?" she demanded innocently, then suddenly it was borne in on her that she had made use of an unladylike expression. "If one boon-

companion says 'blowed !' " she defended haughtily, " I don't see why the other shouldn't. We 'greed to be the same age. Didn't we ? "

" We did," mourned Chris, " there's no getting away from it. That's where the mischief comes in, but I draw the line at your smoking a pipe, Dearlove, and using cuss words. You positively must promise me you won't say blowed again, or I will decline a further acquaintance."

" Oh, very well then," declared Dearlove in exasperation. " Such a fuss ! but I simply don't see why boys say all the nice words. I do call it jolly hard."

" So do I," agreed Chris sympathetically ; " it is an outrage on the intellectual achievements of the sex, but custom demands a certain reticence. Dearlove you may be blowed when there is no one present but myself."

" All right," she said gratefully, " because you know I do like to say it—sometimes."

Chris turned with her clinging to his hand.

" Minions," he began, addressing the rest of the party, " we shall return anon. Prepare the festal board against our arrival. Reggie, keep an eye on Mamie, I see signs of her being lost in thought. Hold on to her."

Mamie reached out a long slender hand towards the bewildered boy, and drew him nearer with a

little laugh. "I warned you not to be surprised," she reminded him. "Don't be so very astonished, Reggie, it's only the Make-Believe."

He drew a long breath, and blinked at her.

"How does she understand it all?" he inquired blankly, "for sometimes I have to keep thinking fast to know what he means. If it wasn't for his eyes, Mamie, I wouldn't know it was make-believe, and it's just as bad sometimes with Dearlove."

"Tell us something out of your little brown book, Reggie," said Ganpa. But Reggie was reluctant. He only wanted to sit between his friends and be silent. Mamie knew what a battle he fought with himself every time he saw Dearlove and Chris depart in company; the bitter resentment against his poor maimed little limbs that overwhelmed him and held him dumb.

Ganpa guessed at it too, because of the boy's eyes. He could not have hidden his suffering from that keen observant gaze that withal dwelt so brief a space on him, and took so little apparent note.

It was only when watching Dearlove's swift swallow-like flight that the boy fully realized the misery of his crippled condition. Dearlove darted and ran out of sheer joy in motion. Yet there was no envy in his suffering, only longing to be

with her, to be able to run by Chris, and hold his hand. Reggie did walk beside him now, sometimes, but very slowly, and for a short way. Chris liked better to carry him, and being carried reminded Reggie more than any other thing how he was handicapped. Mamie divined instinctively how heavy the boy felt his cross at such moments, how much he would have given to be straight and strong, overflowing with keen joyous life, like Dearlove of the beautiful eyes.

Yet he had, as Chris always said, his compensations—the joy in things spiritual, in beauty of sound, and colour, and form. His pride and delight in his friends very nearly balanced the physical suffering, the ever-recurring mental ordeal. Reggie's sensitive little soul was so alive to all things beautiful that his enjoyment approached ecstasy.

Dear as he had grown to them all, his friends would have done anything to keep him in the mean which lies betwixt extremes. In it was his only safety, but how could it be done?

Mamie and Ganpa talked to him softly of many things, opening out his beautiful mind as a flower is opened to the sun, with the flowing tide in their ears, the sound of the bees, and the faint wind. The time passed very quickly.

It seemed that Dearlove and Chris had hardly

gone till the sound of their laughter as they climbed upwards to the ramparts broke on the silence of the golden afternoon. Nesta looked up from her tea-making with a smile, as they came panting upwards lugging between them a huge oblong cardboard box.

"Here we are, good people," announced Dearlove breathlessly, sinking down to mop her moist countenance. "We have got a lot. I do like *plenty* of crackers." She contemplated the box with heartfelt satisfaction as she laid it at Reggie's feet and proceeded to open it.

Having admired its contents rapturously, she immediately instructed Reggie in the uses of crackers, and invited him to pull one on the spot.

He caught hold of the end gingerly, and drew back.

"Pull!" cried Dearlove excitedly. Reggie started violently, and she broke into a peal of laughter. To her delight he found himself in possession of a fringed paper and a plume of dyed pampas grass, with which he decorated Dearlove's flowing hair.

Ganpa regarded her admiringly over his glasses; the pampas grass, just over her right ear, gave her a most distinguished appearance.

"You are like some gorgeous squaw," he commented beamingly.

Dearlove had not quite caught the unfamiliar word.

"Squak," she repeated in a dazed tone, "Squak, Ganpa, what do you mean ? Reggie ? "

She turned to him with an air of hopeless perplexity.

"I—h " began Reggie, then overcome by the absurdity of the sound he threw himself face down in the grass and laughed in utter helplessness.

She regarded him with uncompromising disgust, as one who had forsaken her in extremity.

"Chris, what's a squak ? "

Chris set down the tea-pot, and after one or two ineffectual attempts to extinguish the spirit lamp under the kettle, settled himself to reply.

"A squak," he said instructively, "is the sort of thing you'd be if a Johnnie ten times my size sat down on you suddenly."

Dearlove knitted her brows thoughtfully while she considered this.

"If he were ten times bigger than you," she replied with some resentment, "I'd be as flat as a pancake."

"Exactly what I sought to convey," retorted Chris, "but you'd be a squak first."

Dearlove pondered over this again. "Chris," she ventured appealingly, "will you be one for me, do you mind ? "

"Not at all, not at all," he assured her hastily, "to the best of my ability. Anything to oblige a lady!"

The immediate result of his efforts was an outcry that startled all the sea mews and kittiwakes within hearing distance, and a burst of irresistible laughter. Only Dearlove did not laugh. She stood with her head on one side, considering.

"You simply can't *be* a squak," she asserted at length, "nobody could. But you can make one." She laughed now, with a mischievous sparkling of her big eyes.

"Hark!" she cried, her head on one side again, her finger in the air, "Sambo thinks you are his brother."

Sambo startled the sea-birds still farther, waking all the caves with echo. Reggie crept helplessly up to the crook of Ganpa's arm.

"Do you think," he asked, with a little wistful air, "it is right to laugh so much?"

"Why not?" demanded Ganpa, wiping his eyes exhaustedly. "Laugh when you can, young man. I always do, the oftener the better. Didn't you see me laugh, Reggie?"

"I did," rejoined Reggie, pocketing his coarse handkerchief. "But Ganpa, I am always so afraid when I laugh that I may have to cry more afterwards."

"So do I usually," interposed Dearlove in a moralizing tone; "if I were at school now, an' anybody told me about squaks, I'd laugh like anything, an' I'd be pretty sure to cry 'mmejetly after."

"And the moral of that is," decided Chris, "have nothing to do with the breed of squaks; avoid them as you would the plague, for weeping is the worst of all ways to spend time. Let us pull the rest of our crackers."

CHAPTER IX

GOD'S LAMPS

THEY were returning from a long day at Le Gouffre, packed together in the roomy old-fashioned barouche affected by the Guernsey folk for outings of the sort, a barouche where you can pack away as many baskets, and hampers, and tea-things as you like, and embarrass nobody one whit for them all.

Ganpa sat between Mamie and Nesta, holding his hat in his hands, and letting the sweet sea breezes ruffle his white hair.

Chris sat with his back to the horses, Reggie on his knee, Dearlove with her right arm passed through his left, her brown head on his arm. They were proceeding after the leisurely Guernsey fashion, which means "no hurry, let's take plenty of time." There is no need for hurry in Guernsey, because everything takes time, plenty of it, and loiter as they would, it was always haste too great for Reggie's mind.

This evening it was dusk too, and it is the nature of man, deep and ineradicable to loiter in the gloaming, because he cannot do otherwise.

It is then the past takes hold of his garment, and says softly, "Tarry a while, I pray thee, and remember."

The sun had gone down into the tide in a clear sky like a ball of molten gold, leaving behind him a heaven like unto that sea whereon no ship sails, or adventurer puts out. Beryl-tinted and serene, as if for once the deeps beneath were reflected in the heights above.

There was no talk among the Make-Believers, they drove in silence. Not because there was lack of anything to say, but because the Chief Conspirator was too busy thinking for speech. Ganpa was thinking too, Nesta and Mamie and Chris alike wrapt in meditation. There is no factor so potent for thought as the wayside scents and sounds, and the eventide dreaming of the sea.

Dearlove sat with her cheek on Chris's sleeve, her face upturned to the sky, her eyes, in the star-filled twilight very soft and dreamy, yet brilliant, her expression mirroring a thousand changeful impressions.

Reggie, nestling into his friend's embrace, sat with his head on his chest, inexpressibly content.

They had been counting the stars as they came twinkling out into the wide beryl heights above them, but their voices had faded into the fragrant duskiness, till they too were dreaming with wide eyes, thinking the long strange thoughts of childhood. The white-winged moths flew above the honeysuckle trumpets in the warm sweet evening air, a bat flitted crookedly in and out among the hedgerows. The little hesitating wind came up among the trees and whispered confidentially to them about the flowing tide, lapping the granite cliffs in liquid murmurings along the irregular shore.

It was Dearlove who broke the charmed silence, yet hardly disturbed it with her low meditative tones.

"Chris," she began drowsily, "what time do you like best to be in heaven?"

He pondered awhile over this question, very grave and severe, till his eye caught Nesta's and he smiled whimsically.

"I'm not quite sure," he decided with reluctance, as if he hated to part with such fascinating prospect as a time in heaven. "What time do you like best yourself?"

Dearlove became lost in thought before answering, then she spoke very dreamily and slowly.

"I think in the evening, about this time," she

meditated, "so I could be with Our Little Lord when He goes out to light the stars."

Reggie raised himself off his resting place, to peer at her in astonished interest.

"How does He light them, Dearlove?" he questioned, wide-eyed and eager, searching her rapt face.

"He goes out in the sky among them," she explained solemnly, "when they're all dark, an' touches them with His finger—like this."

She put forth a slim finger and pointed it from star to star.

"Then they're so glad, that they 'mmejitely light up an' shine like anything."

"Yes," reflected Chris, "I would like to see that, Dearlove."

"The stars are worlds," faltered Reggie diffidently, laying his cheek with a happy look against the rough tweed of Chris's coat. "I once thought they were great eyes looking through the dark. But a man told me they were worlds. Oh! Chris I do so love the smell of your coat, and the feel of it makes me so happy."

"The smell is his pipe," explained Dearlove with a happy gurgle. "But the feel is his heart. You can always tell if people love you in their hearts by the feel of their clothes; some people's clothes make you feel 'testable. Mostly they're

old aunts, an' they say 'Little girls should be seen an' not heard,' as if it was any good bein' seen, if nobody ever heard you."

"There be aunts a-many," observed Chris gravely, "but few that can expound the stars. Drive on, Dearlove the Oracle, expound some more; I like it. I used to be told when I was a boy they were holes in the heavenly floor to let the glory through. Reggie, here, explains they are worlds! Worlds, forsooth! What a delusion. You know all about 'em. Tell us; what are they?"

"They're God's lamps, of course," declared Dearlove in a fashion so completely matter-of-fact, as to admit of no contradiction.

"Of course," admitted Chris readily, his deep voice very rich and sweet as he looked over at his sister in the dim light. "How exceedingly dense those scientific Johnnies are to be sure!"

Reggie lifted a shadowy hand to Dearlove's cheek, and touched it with a shy tenderness.

"Tell us some more," he entreated in a whisper. "Why did God put lamps in the sky?"

"To show the sailors the way at sea, of course," she replied, with a dreamy promptitude. "An' because if they weren't lighted some people would never look up through their windows an' say, 'Oh! there's God's lamps all lit, I really

must say my prayers,' an' I know they mind people of lots of things ; Mamie told me."

"What things?" asked Reggie in a hushed, breathless way.

"Oh, lots of things," crooned Dearlove slowly.

"Mamie disremembers an awful lot because she has such a large forgettory."

"Good!" exclaimed Chris approvingly. "Now I know what's the matter with me, I have a very large forgettory."

"But is mine so very large?" asked Mamie, with an irrepressible little laugh.

"Well, rather large, sweet one," her daughter assured her.

Suddenly she sat bolt upright, and began to expound what was a new and remarkable theory.

"Mamie has a simply 'stordinary lot of things to remember. The things people remember go into their rememberry, an' the things they forget into their forgettory. If you have an awfully large rememberry, you must have a large forgettory too. When Mamie looks up at God's lamps she remembers things out of her forgettory that often s'prise her, I know, because she told me herself. I remember things out of my forgettory too.

"But I always stop short just as I'm going to remember the very nicest part. I s'ppose they

stick somewhere comin' out. Reggie, do you know when the sky is black, an' all the little stars wink at you, an' it's dreadfully cold, with a loud high soarin' wind blowin' over the edge of the world, an' it's moonlight?"

"Yes," assented Reggie faintly, "I do."

"When it's like that," declared Dearlove positively, "I remember all about everything. An' I can see Our Little Lord goin' out in the sky, an' I do so want to go to Him. When I were a bird——"

"Steady!" interrupted Chris severely. "Dearlove, this is not in the game. Any mortal thing you like, but a bird your size is too large for me to swallow. Don't be springing rocs and eagles, and such large game on your unsuspecting boon-companion. You will shatter his nervous system, already tottering on its throne by reason of reckless over-indulgence in Make-Believe."

Nesta bent towards Dearlove, smiling but curious.

"Don't heed him," she admonished. "Dearlove tell me what sort of a bird were you?"

"Please do tell me that, too," begged Reggie quickly.

"Could you sing?" inquired Mamie.

"That's all gone back into the forgettory," deplored Dearlove dismally. "But I think I

was a little sort of bird, an' I sat on a tree, and the wind roared, an' it was moonlight."

"Had I been there," remarked Ganpa, "I would have sorted you for being out of your nest in a black nor'-Easter. Your feet must have been frozen."

"You might have kept them warm had you sat on them," ventured Reggie timidly.

"An' tucked her head under her wing, poor thin'!" added Chris in a tone of severe condemnation.

Reggie looked up at him through the dusk with a sudden panic, then laughed and laid his head back again on its resting-place. He had thought for the moment his idol was in earnest.

Dearlove shook her brown hair, and peered round her family in mingled scorn and disgust. Then she suddenly began a series of frightful attempts to dislocate her neck.

"I simply can't!" she regretted dismally. "Chris would you mind putting your head under your wing for me, just till I see how it's done?"

"Madam," cried Chris with stately hauteur, "I will not; I firmly but gently refuse. Would you see me run into the lowermost dungeon of Castle Cornet? Would it, think you, be a seemly spectacle for a large sized Make-Believer to be caught in the streets of St. Peter's Port by the

local Roberto, putting his head under his wing, regardless alike of his years and inches? Go to! you, Dearlove, are devoured by an insatiable curiosity. You strain the boon-companionship to breaking point. We are not speaking any more."

She put both hands on his knees and peered at him with laughing eyes.

"When we get back," she promised him, "you shall be a toobadour with the tongs for a light guitar. We'll play at King Richard bein' shut up in his tall tower."

"What I would like to know," remarked Ganpa, "is the kind of bird you were, and you are evading it."

"Perhaps," suggested Mamie, with a flicker of mirth in her level voice, "it was a squak."

And with that they had arrived at the house over the town, and were looking down on St. Peter Port pretending to be besieged, and the torpedo boats running the gauntlet of the fort guns.

CHAPTER X

SINGING OFF THE RAIN

THERE came a grey day into the radiant Guernsey weather—pearly grey, soft and soundless. It crept up off the sea, blotting out Sark and Herm, drawing a pale blue curtain over Alderney, obliterating the dim outline of distant Jersey, and the still more distant shadow of France, slumbering bluey across the heaving waters. All the tall red-tiled houses climbing the steep road looked suddenly warm and sheltering and confidential together, huddling closely in the mist-wreaths, as if reminding each other of certain grey days in the past—stormy riotous days, when the saturnine red-bearded Duke William came to levy tribute from his vassals, and recruit for his freebooting hordes.

Perhaps they recalled with some satisfaction the fact that like the wild Highlands, little Guernsey had never been conquered, but rendered

vassalage to the English only of its own goodwill and pleasure, retaining its own laws, its own customs and government, when many an older, bigger and more powerful country was overrun and made subject.

Those steep old houses could recall many another kind of memory. The Guernsey nobles with their women-folk coming sedately into St. Peter Port to assembly and ball, by the little narrow water lanes. Preceded by a servant man with two lanterns, insignia of noble birth, the common people being allowed to carry only one light in their darkness.

They would remember the burnings in the little triangular space at the foot of the hill leading up to the old prison, grim and frowning, beside the ancient church, that overlooked the unresting sea. The wretched prisoners, the forbidding, dark browed judges, and the faggots laid about the awful stake.

There are witches in Guernsey still, though no one desires to burn them, but rather to continue subject to their spells. The charm of youth, and beauty, clear grey eyes, and soft kindly lips, that speak no evil, and cheeks like the budding rose. One remembers the past, finding it insistent and loud of voice, on grey days in the little green island. In every place the mist brings

back forgotten things, showing them dimly through the shadows.

On this day, that singular stillness which permeates the atmosphere when Nature wraps herself about in haze, was heavy over all; all sounds came up through it with near distinctness. The cries of the workers, loading and unloading at the wharves, the clinking grind of the running windlass, the low chantie of the men, "It's time for us to leave you!" The splash of oars in the green hidden harbour, the calls of gulls and guillemots round the ramparts out to sea.

Ganpa was walking about the lawn in front of the house, snipping the dead leaves and withered blooms off the rose trees, an expression of kind austerity on his fine old face—Ganpa was thinking of the past, perhaps wondering, maybe regretting. He had gone all along the narrow terrace and back, when Dearlove came flying past him, a blaze of red and white, and paused abruptly at the wall, to look out in the pearly greyness of the prospect.

"I do believe," she lamented solemnly, "it's goin' to rain."

And she said it with an air of irrevocable disaster. Granpa smiled to himself as he looked at her. In childhood it is sometimes tragedy that the sun does not shine for a day.

"Going to rain!" he echoed reassuringly. "Oh, I think not—it may be only heat."

"Ganpa," she came to a standstill before him, a brilliant little figure in her red cotton frock and buckled shoes. She had donned her favourite ornament too, in honour of whatever proceeding she had determined on, and was happily conscious of a string of clouded amber that any one, young or old, might have envied her.

But her small face was wearing an expression of great anxiety, and her brows came together in a frown. "I don't think p'haps you quite understand this kind of weather," she continued. "We get it at the Convent in heaps—low and grey like an' sort of shimmery an' still. You go a long way back in it. So does everybody else. You can't sheik in it or be in a hurry; you just want to creep, an' people's eyes look at you a long way off, an' their voices too—an' you just want your mother—*awfully*."

"Then when you're fielding p'haps a weeny teeny whisper comes in among the tree tops an' they sort of shiver to themselves. It makes you feel like bein' on a hill by your own lone self. Frightfully lonely. An' then comes one big spot—sometimes if you're lookin' up you get it in your eye—mostly on your nose. Once I got it in my mouth—it's rather difficult to look up

blank in the sky with your mouth shut. After that it teems an' pours an' you've got to scoot.

"Once we were all down by the lake when it came on like that sort. An' we did get wet. We were simply soaked—we had to put our worldly clothes on till our uniforms got dry. We don't often have a chance like that though," she added regretfully, "mostly the nun sees it a long way off an' says 'Get in children, quick; it's goin' to pelt with rain.' Then we've simply got to run. If you can jump the flower beds it's rather nice. I came down in the middle of the tulip bed one day, an' I had to pay a shillin' fine—I'm nearly always bein' fined. One day I banged my head against a desk, an' the desk was broke. My head was hurt awfully, but I had to pay half a crown fine for breakin' the desk. I think that was rather mean, 'specially as my head was broken, an' they wouldn't let me fine them."

Ganpa stood at ease, one hand behind him, and listened with a quiet smile twinkling in and out of his eagle eyes, at the matter of her discourse, as he looked down on her from his great height.

"That is all most interesting, Dearlove," he decided gravely. "I agree with you that it seems unfair to have penalized you for breaking

the desk, and made no allowance for the broken head. But what I am most interested in is what you tell me about your clothes. I wonder if the worldly clothes take away the Convent feeling? ”

“ Well, of course,” considered Dearlove philosophically, “ you get a different feel in every kind of clothes. You have a Convent feel, an’ a worldly feel. I do enjoy the worldly feel when I come out. It is nice to be in the world again after a long term. The summer term is the longest.”

She sat down on the terrace, and searched in the pocket of her dress, unsuccessfully; finally she turned its contents out on the grass, producing a handkerchief bordered with red, white and blue, with crossed Union Jacks in each corner. A large sized gold watch of ancient make, two tennis balls, a tortoise-shell bon-bon box, a lace-edged picture of St. Philomena very much crumpled, an ink eraser, three crayons, a pocketknife, a chain purse, and a shiny-backed notebook. Last of all a peach that had suffered considerably from its companionship.

She returned the various treasures enumerated to their receptacle, looked at the peach critically and bit a large piece out of the least injured side, discussing it with manifest if guarded enjoyment.

"Your pocket seems to have considerable carrying capacity," remarked Ganpa admiringly.

"Oh, that's nothing." Dearlove shook all her brown hair about her, in pitying commiseration of his obvious ignorance. Evidently he had but little knowledge of what can be compressed into the feminine poke. Dearlove while she admitted the superiority of numbers appertaining to the masculine pocket, yet had some opinion of the solitary one permitted to her sex.

"In my uniform pocket," she continued, "I can get in as much as this, an' my Brownie doll beside. You know my Brownie, Ganpa? We took him with us to *The Cherry Girl*. He liked *The Cherry Girl* very much—so did I, I would have loved to be 'Thunder' or 'Lightning.' I used to put Brownie under my pillow, an' we had such lots of conve'sations about *The Cherry Girl*. He 'minded me of a lot I had forgotten. Brownies never forget things."

She paused for another bite at her peach, and resumed reflectively—

"I should love to be a real Brownie, and live in a fairy place—a pretty Brownie like the one Mamie has in her picture." An expression of ecstasy came over her features at the gorgeousness of this idea. But it was followed by a sudden gloom. "I s'ppose," she went on, "if you were a

Brownie you couldn't be given 'indifferent' for playin' see-saw all day on a straw?"

"I don't quite grasp it," said Ganpa, shifting his weight from one foot to the other with an inquiring eye. "What do you get 'indifferent' for?"

"When you're good enough that you simply can't be any better, you get 'Very good'," explained Dearlove vindictively, "an' when you've just common sort of conduct you get 'Good' at the 'xemptions', but if you're not 'xactly bad, but nearly, you get 'indifferent,' an' that makes you feel awful. Mostly when you've been enjoyin' yourself you find you've got 'indifferent'—that's my 'sperience anyway."

She returned gloomily to her peach, eyeing it with unconcealed disgust.

"Alas!" concluded Ganpa, putting up his hand to hide a smile, "that's the experience we all have."

"Well," gloomed Dearlove resentfully, "if you were a Brownie, you wouldn't get it for playin' see-saw on a straw."

"Chris," said Ganpa to his son, who had come up in time for this last observation, and was turning it over in his mind, "I put it to you as a sensible man, is Dearlove the figure for see-sawing across a mushroom on a straw?"

Dearlove burst into a peal of laughter at this unappreciative remark, in which all three joined.

"Dearlove," commented Chris, "is a trifle large for that exercise. Yesterday when she dived into the pool she made a tidal wave that went all the way to Herm and left the little lobsters among the heather."

"When I think of that straw!" Ganpa's eyes twinkled merrily as he shook his head at the bare contemplation of the idea of a straw large enough to carry her.

"Some straws must be pretty big," defended Dearlove energetically; "they break camels' backs with them—I know they do Chris—I've seen it in a book."

"That," remarked Chris with an air of conviction, "is the sort of straw you are young lady."

"Oh no!" cried Dearlove emphatically, "I couldn't be a straw, though I'd rather like to try bein' a camel, just to see what it's like. But I should hate to have people I didn't know sitting on my hump! What I would really an' truly honour brightly love, would be bein' a knight-errant. In armour, with a great wavin' plume in my helmet, an' a bright shield with a device on it, an' a little foot page to burnish it every day—an' to go prickin' o'er the plain on my

gallant steed, singin' all the way, in search of 'dventures."

She flung away the peach stone, and springing to her feet, threw her arms wide with delight at the prospect opened by imagination before her.

"Oh, Chris!" she cried rapturously, "wouldn't you love to come with me an' be my gentle striplin'?"

"I should enjoy it," agreed Chris enthusiastically, "beyond anything. I'm just the gentle stripling size. Regard me, Ganpa!"

And he gazed down upon his own generous proportions with a complacent eye.

"I suppose," suggested Ganpa with regret in his voice, "you wouldn't have anything in the gentle stripling line that would do for me? I'm twenty-five, Dearlove, but vigorous, and can turn a hand to almost anything."

Dearlove shook her head regretfully.

"I'm most awfully sorry," she responded, "but I couldn't. Three would fill up the gallant steed too much. There wouldn't be any room for distressed maidens, or enchanted queens, or anything like that sort."

"Oh, of course, if you are content with a mere common sort of animal like a horse," criticized Chris superciliously, "but an elephant now? or a giraffe? The elephant could pick off the

enemy and fling him in the mud. That's his particular qualification. He can reach such a long way. While the enemy is dusting himself you and your elephant, and little foot pages, gentle striplings and all, can make tracks across the horizon—rather flabbergast the enemy that kind of warfare."

Dearlove looked up at him with great contempt.

"I don't want to run away," she said with lofty scorn, "I would rather fight."

"Oh, you would, would you?" inquired Chris, putting his hands in his pockets thoughtfully. "Well, that's a mistake; if you fight you're apt to get killed, as Paddy Quin would say. The more you run away the oftener you can come back. Besides there's no fun in being dead—or after. You can't have any larks after being weltered in your gore."

"Oh, but it might be the enemy that would be killed," cried Dearlove hotly, "an' then he would welter in his gore."

She caught herself up on that phrase, turning it over in her mind with evident distaste.

"I don't think I would like to welter much," she thought; "it sounds awful messy. Oh!" She stood bolt upright, holding out her upturned palms in the air.

"A spot!" she cried tragically. "I must simply go an' bawl hymns."

"But why?" questioned Chris blankly. "Why this sudden piety? It is but nine o'clock."

"Oh, don't you know?" she asked irritably. "I rather think you couldn't have had much instruction when you were a little boy, Chris, because you know you are rather ignorant about the simplest things. I want to keep off the rain—but I mayn't get the saints to keep it off altogether, because I should have begun earlier. Only it was such a temptation to talk to Ganpa. I s'ppose so many people pray for fine weather that they can't make it go round, so they send some sun, an' some cloud, an' p'haps a sprinkle."

She looked anxiously from Ganpa to Chris.

"You wouldn't mind a sprinkle?" she suggested engagingly, "we can cover Reggie up."

"Personally," Chris assured her, with an ingenuous air, "I would like it; it would make me grow."

She glanced round at the misty sea, heaving in opalescent undulations, to the misty sky round the pearly shores, and made a sudden retreat indoors. But half-way there, she was arrested in her flight by the sound of the breakfast bell rung with a vigorous hand.

She stood on one foot for an instant, meditat-

ing, then on the other, and thought for an interval, her relations watching her with great interest.

Finally she broke into a volume of devout and penetrating song.

"There!" she cried, looking round at them, "that'll do to keep it off till I've had some breakfast—I'm awfully hungry—what do you think, Chris?"

"I think," he returned with solemn conviction, "if that's a specimen of the style in which you importune for fine weather, we shall have it hot and dry for weeks. There isn't a saint in the calendar would risk a repetition of that. Why they must be fair deaved."

"Well, of course," defended Dearlove with some resentment, "you really must *make* them hear, mustn't you now? They can't be always 'ttendin'. So you think that will keep off the rain?"

"I do," declared Ganpa.

"And so do I," added Chris. "Come and have your breakfast, Dearlove. It will be fine. I should say you had sung off all the rain there will be this year."

CHAPTER XI

THE APPEARANCE OF MOSES

“**O**H, Reggie!” panted Dearlove, coming hastily up the rocks and throwing herself among the heather by his side. “I’ve got such a beautiful thing!”

“What?” Reggie sat up, a brilliant anticipation succeeding the dream in his eyes, as he lifted himself off Mamie’s knees, and laid his book on the purple bloom. Mamie, with the paint-brush poised in her fingers, regarded her daughter with a sense of artistic joy. Dearlove in a short serge skirt, a tightly fitting guernsey with the sleeves rolled up to her pretty shoulders, her bare feet thrust into sand-shoes, and her wind-blown hair and wild-rose cheeks made an entirely satisfying picture.

“What is the beautiful thing?” asked Reggie breathlessly.

Dearlove held out a sun-browned hand, and

showed him a shell, delicately, translucently yellow, banded with ruddy brown.

"Oh, Dearlove!" he sighed with an echo of reproachful disappointment in his voice. "A snail! snails aren't beautiful."

"Oh, but they are! some of them. Some white ones are 'specially lovely,'" Dearlove declared with an odd little vehemence—"most lovely, Reggie. Look at this one; you would think it was a little bit of sunset grown hard, wouldn't you now, Mamie?" She held out the small radiant thing towards her mother.

"It is very beautiful; nearly everything is beautiful when it is looked into, Reggie, and what we cannot consider quite beautiful we must acknowledge to be wonderful, and quite perfect—worth studying."

Reggie listened to his friend's dreamy accents, and watched her turning over the shell in her long fingers, his face a reflection of varying emotions. Surprise, aversion, something nearly horror chased each other across his limpid eyes, his sensitive lips curving and straightening unconsciously with his thought. Dearlove having passed on the snail, became suddenly intent on a something crawling round her wrist, an absorbing and new interest.

Mamie bent forward to see, as she held out her

slim hand, speechlessly. It was a small vividly green caterpillar, standing erect on its end, surveying the strange country in which it so curiously found itself.

"Put it off, quick!" cried Reggie shuddering.
"Dearlove!"

She raised her eyes to his, with that absorbed expression in them that always so bewildered him. Dearlove nearly always had it when she was contemplating anything that crawled, or hopped or flew. It was an expression at once speculative and admiring, and when he saw it Reggie had grown to know how far away everything else beyond the subject of contemplation would probably be from Dearlove's thoughts.

"Is'nt it int'restin'?" she asked breathlessly.
"I do think the different ways God teaches things to go about is awful curious. This sort of caterpillar, you know, has to make hoops of himself, an' he makes a swing of silk when he's tired and swings off trees an' things. It must be awful 'xaustin' to bring your heels to your head every time you want to take a step. Isn't he a lovely colour, Reggie?"

Reggie shuddered violently, and shrank back to Mamie's knees.

"I think he's horrible!" he cried with averted

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eyes, paling as he spoke. "Things that creep make me sick."

Dearlove looked at him with a kind of wide-eyed pity, and perhaps curiosity, only that Dearlove was much too well-bred to let him see she considered such an attitude of mind as being out of the common.

But Reggie intuitively divined her surprise, and was instantly ashamed of it. He rebelled instantly against his nausea, and crept a little nearer her in the effort to overcome it, his frail body involuntarily bracing itself for retreat, against Mamie's arm.

He looked at the little green creature on Dearlove's hand, first with unconcealed loathing, then with a surprised and sudden interest.

"It's very queer," he said softly, and apologetically. "I never thought crawling things could be pretty, I—I never looked at one before," and he coloured scarlet as he made the confession.

"He's an awfully lovely sort of green colour," commented Dearlove in a rap whisper. "That's because he lives on the little new green leaves. Now he's goin'. Look at his long silk rope, Mamie."

The caterpillar dropped into the heather, and stood erect, waving its long body to and fro, for an instant before disappearing. "Good-bye,

Greeny ! ” cried Dearlove, waving her fingers at him. “ Some day, I s’ppose you’ll be a butterfly. It must be most awful funny to be a butterfly after you’ve been a grub. I used to wish I might be a butterfly myself, but s’ppose I’d have to crawl about without my arms or legs first. So p’haps its just as well I couldn’t be, for I don’t think I could be really charitable in my heart to other things that went about on two legs, ’specially birds, if they ate me up.”

She took the snail off Mamie’s hand, and placed it tenderly on a lichen-covered boulder, then gathered a long plume of violet-blooming grass, with which she touched the gay shell gently as she talked.

“ Of all things,” she remarked thoughtfully, “ I’d mostly loathe to be a snail. To have to crawl to parties, an’ the pantomime—I s’ppose snails must have parties an’ pantomimes—would be hateful, an’ to carry my house on my back everywhere ! You couldn’t play caché, or basket-ball, or cricket, or almost anything, with a house on your back. I’d rather be a cat, ’specially in winter.”

“ Why ? ” inquired Reggie with growing bewilderment. Dearlove’s disquisitions on things in general were of a slightly bewildering quality, and resulted always in completely mystifying him

for a time. Her point of view was so unheard of, so far as he was concerned, and yet so fascinatingly absorbing to look back on and remember in the long lonely nights in his little room in the married quarters.

"I—I could imagine being a cat, but why in the winter?"

"Because," expounded Dearlove enthusiastically, "a cat has such a lovely warm velvet dress, an' never has to take it off at all to go to bed. In the mornin' all it has to do is just to lick itself, an' go in to breakfast."

She paused with an air of thoughtful reminiscence, and drew circles round the snail with the grass blade.

"I tried lickin' myself once," she continued absently, "but I simply couldn't get round the back of my neck, an' nurse said I was naughty, an' rather a dirty sort of way of washin'. It tasted horrid, an' she was disgusted too. But I thought I'd try."

Reggie looked at Mamie with a whole world of appeal in his eyes, then down at Chris, who was shaking gently under his hat brim, drawn conveniently down over his nose, as he lay at full length in the heather smoking.

In neither of them did he find any explanation of the doubt that troubled his soul. Mamie still

gazed dreamily out to sea, Chris continued to shake, Dearlove in the meantime returned to her yellow snail.

"I rather think," she meditated calmly, "that snails and spinders, an' things like that sort, must belong to the fairies, they spin such lovely things."

"Snails," doubted Reggie feebly, "don't spin?"

"Oh, don't they, then?" asked Dearlove, with complete conviction. "You just watch! Look in the garden in the mornin' an' you'll see a sort of beautiful shiny road, very small and narrow, along the border. That's what the snails make for the fairies to walk along. Snails are made of dew, you know, so p'haps they don't achually spin, but they do it somehow, an' the beautifulest sort of pattern—all zig-zaggy in and out. It makes you sure in your mind about fairies.

"Spinders are wonderful. They make fine lace. I've seen it lots of times when the fairies have forgotten it, or p'haps they may have torn it at the dancin' an' left it out for the spinders to mend. It is usually left lyin' among the 'sturtiums; it has little teeny weeny diamon's all over it. Mamie says there is a country called Tir-na-oge, where the gate into it is made of spinder's webs all covered with pearls an' diamon's. Nobody ever grows old there. If you look at a spinder spinnin' you will see he knows all about the gate.

"Once I thought I'd like to have a spinder for a pet, like Wallace—no, Bruce I mean! I kept him in a match-box in my uniform pocket, but I had a tadpole in a bottle too, an' when I was playin' cricket, Mary Wyndham sent me a most awful fast ball, an' it broke the bottle, so my poor spinder was drowned. His legs were all together in a heap: I was sad!"

"You—er, buried him?" inquired Chris sympathetically from beneath the brim of his hat.

"I wanted to," agreed Dearlove quickly, "but a thrush simply snatched him. They're so familiar at the Convent, they don't mind us much. He might have seen it was a dead spinder, an' I was makin' a hole to bury him in. Anyway I was glad he was drowned. It would have been much miserabler to be ground up in the thrush's little bag of stones. Birds have an awful horrid way of eatin' their food, Reggie. They gobble it down whole, an' then grind it up in a bag of little stones inside them after. It's rather a cruel sort of way of eatin', 'specially to worms—they're so long. I wonder why St. Francis was so d'voted to birds, though of course some birds are darlins. I gen'ally get 'indifferent' when we have lessons out of doors in the summer, because I am always listenin' to them."

"When you should be doing your lessons?" suggested Mamie.

"I wish," mourned Dearlove, wisely choosing to ignore the remark, "I could speak to St. Francis. I would like so much to talk to him about his little brothers. You know, Reggie, St. Francis must have been most awful nice. He called the birds his little brothers. I don't think he would give me 'indifferent.' An' I do wish I had the odour of sanctity, or something like that, so's I wouldn't get 'indifferent' so often. If I had even horns, like Moses."

She paused again, as if struck by the brilliancy of this idea, and contemplated herself mentally, adorned like Moses.

"Horns of light," she murmured. "No, they simply wouldn't dare, if I had horns."

"Horns!" commented Reggie blankly. "Oh, Dearlove!"

"The little boys," remarked Chris sepulchrally, "would run after and call you names."

"Oh no they wouldn't," denied Dearlove hotly. "I'd blast them."

"Then you'd get run in," insisted Chris.

She waved such a possibility scornfully away from her, and sat haughtily down on the boulder beside her snail, prepared to discuss the matter to its utmost.

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Chris sat up and patted his pipe with the palm of his broad right hand, scattering the white ash out in a tiny cloud.

"Besides," he went on argumentatively, "it would not be quite fair to Moses. He was an exceedingly peppery old patriarch, but he hardly ever blasted any one, though I can't deny he broke things, occasionally."

"He was found in the river Nile, among the rushes," ventured Reggie timidly.

"I know all about him," returned Dearlove loftily, scornfully tilting up her little straight toes. "I know some poetry about him too. Patrick was singin' it the other day, when he was mendin' a broom handle for Barbara, an' I asked him to tell it to me. It's rather nice poetry. Would you like me to tell you it, Mamie?"

"I would indeed," said Mamie with great interest—an interest not unmixed with anxiety.

"Go on," urged Chris, "we're all ready."

Dearlove descended from her boulder, and struck an attitude, then proceeded with outstretched hand to give as near an imitation of Paddy's soft brogue as she could get.

Wanst, whin the Amporeur of great Agypt's oyle,
King Pharough's daughter wint to bathe in stoyle.
And as this maiden was proceedin' in her play,
She tripped over Moses—lapped up in a wisp of hay.

Her audience hung breathlessly waiting on her words—their eyes fixed on her glowing face.

“That’s all,” she concluded regretfully. “There was some more verses, but he said he hadn’t time that day—p’haps he’ll tell me the rest again.”

“Good gracious,” exclaimed Mamie faintly. “What an extraordinary poem.”

“It isn’t really a poem,” corrected Dearlove gently, “it’s a song. I only said ‘poetry’ because he didn’t teach me the first half of it.”

“H-u-m!” ejaculated Chris. “It is quaint, picturesque and unusual. It has the pure Celtic ring; can’t you remember any more Dearlove?”

“I wish I could,” she said mournfully, “but I never heard any more.”

“Well,” he commented, “the poet had great hardness of heart to leave that poor suffering Moses to the inclemency of the weather, with no other protection than a wisp of hay.”

“That must have been at the time they found him,” explained Dearlove patiently. “He got some more things to wear when he was grown up. You see him with a long night-gown thing on in the pictures. An’ in some of them he’s got an awful lot of hair, an’ a simply frightful beard, an’ horns. An’ in the others he has no hair at all. It is funny, but do you know, I never could love Moses the way I do St. Francis, or St. John.

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Moses is sort of grown-uppish—you can't really care for him—an' I know he wouldn't like any of the things I love—ice-creams, or pantomimes, or anything. I often wonder how Dan Leno will get on with him. An' I'm almost sure all the little smilin' angels must run away from him. He looks so cross, and they can't run very fast because their feet grow straight down out of their ankle bones, so they have to run on their toenails. There is a little girl in the pantomime who can do it—I can't, I've tried 'peatedly—I don't like it."

"What do you think is the reason of your failure?" asked Chris.

"I think," she mourned, "it is because I have no wings."

"Ah!" A great light seemed to have dawned on Chris: he was positively illuminated by it. "That's the thing Philomena—you must cultivate wings. No nun will dare to take away your exemption if you have a fine pair of white pinions at your back—she would be in too much awe of you. Better than horns."

"Oh, but," she sighed regretfully, "they were horns of light."

CHAPTER XII

A THRILLING EPISODE

THERE is a fuss to-day, rather," began Dearlove, as she settled Reggie in his special chair on the lawn, and looked at him with a sort of anxious affection. Reggie was so transparent after his slow progress up the hill—and so proud was he now of being able to walk up that no amount of persuasion would ever induce him to accept Patrick's hand or arm. Spartan-like he made light of his difficulties, and Spartan-like he smiled over his breathlessness and fatigue when the difficulty was surmounted. And though Chris would always meet him at the bottom of the steps, and carry him to his own particular place, where Nesta and Mamie had spread on a little table such books, stories and pictures as they knew he would like, he would never say Reggie must not do the long climb: Chris saw better than any one how the efforts he made physically

and mentally were developing Reggie into a something healthier and stronger than he could ever have hoped to be had they not come in contact.

Though he suffered still, he had less pain, and could forget it in his new occupations, in his astonishing happiness.

He came to them every morning as a matter of course. But for Patrick's shy opposition Nesta would have had him installed in the gay little spare room beyond that of Chris, and dressed him in the mornings, and cared for him through the day, and tucked him away with a kiss and a blessing at night.

There was nearly always a time in the day that Nesta thought this thing, and remembered with a wistful little pang the empty bed with its rose-coloured bed-spread, covered with long trails of eglantine. The eglantine reminded her of the little lad. She was always mentally hiding the blurred outline of his shrunken little figure beneath its fragrant level, and seeing his head on the lace-edged pillow, with the curls blowing back off his white forehead, and his great eyes closed in sleep. Nesta yearned over him hungrily ; he was Chris's little boy ; she wanted him really for her own, to nurse and keep and protect. But Patrick stood piteously between. He could not

give her the child, and he could not tell her why.

She had gone indoors to get him the cup of milk she had come to insist upon every morning after his arrival. Chris was smoking his after-breakfast pipe and reading the paper. Ganpa was hidden behind *The Times* again, and making rude remarks about the Government, and the conduct of the War Office. Reggie knew all these remarks quite well. He heard them once a day at this time.

Mamie was sitting with her hands loosely clasped, looking out on the changing sea. There was a suggestion of excitement in the golden air, as if something unexpected had come to pass in the night. Dearlove began to explain the impression at once, as was her fashion.

There was the sound of prolonged hammering, and Reggie looked at her interrogatively.

"It's the rats," said Dearlove, pensively smiling "they achully ate the gas-pipes, so Ganpa had to send for those men—an' they pulled up all the kitchen floor, an' all the floor of the servants' hall."

She sat down, and picking a grass stem began to chew it thoughtfully. "Chris," she began, "when rats eat gas-pipes do they 'xplode?"

"The rats?" inquired Chris placidly, as he

puffed out a series of whirling smoke rings, "or the gas-pipes—which ? "

Reggie laughed softly at the question, and girded himself for the usual encounter. Dearlove lifted an indignant chin, but her annoyance at the frivolity of her boon-companion subsided into contemplative calm, as he gazed inquiringly, pipe in hand.

"Course," she concluded emphatically, "if they ate gas-pipes they must 'xplode 'ventually. "But why do they eat things like that sort ? "

"Pure cussedness," rejoined Chris immediately. "Rats, my beloved, are original sin. They do everything they ought not to do, out of sheer love of it. They dine without a qualm on anything from kerosene cans to the Crown of England."

"If they did that," said Dearlove enthusiastically, "they would be 'xecuted for high treason—off with their heads ! "

She contemplated an imaginary fulfilment of her command with a pleased and gratified countenance, then plunged into a rapturous description of the proceedings as they ought to be. "There would be a headsman in black," she went on, "with a block, an' a mask, an' a huge axe—an' he would beg the rat's pardon before he cut off his head."

She came to an end, her expressive face mirror-

ing a quick succession of thought. Suddenly she bounded to her feet, put another cushion behind Reggie's back, brought a tuffet for his small narrow feet—and sat slowly down again, looking thoughtfully round on her family.

"I know a rather nice sort of story," she ventured tentatively. "Ganpa, would you like to hear it?"

"Dearlove," returned Ganpa solemnly, "you know there is nothing in the world I like so much as your stories. Pray go on and tell it."

"Wait a bit, wait a bit," cried Chris cautiously; "what kind of story is it? Anything likely to curdle my young blood? Don't poison my dreams at night, young lady. My nerves are already shattered by awful experiences with you."

Reggie tucked himself farther into his wicker chair, and laughed irrepressibly. Dearlove looked up at him quickly, smiling in return. "Are you comfo'table dear?" she asked. "I simply can't bear anybody to be discomfo'table when I'm tellin' a story."

"That's the artistic temperament, miss; if people aren't comfortable they will criticize unfavourably, so likewise will they if the story makes them uncomfortable. So look out."

"Oh, I don't really think it's that," urged Reggie, flushing up, "it's just because she is

always makin' me comfortable—all of you are. I sometimes wonder I can be so happy; I didn't think anybody could be, you know, so happy as I am up here."

"And that will be all right," concluded Chris agreeably; "it's the air, Reggie."

Reggie sighed through sheer pleasure, shaking his head. He knew it was something other than the air that made him feel so light of heart and easy of body.

"I do love your stories, Dearlove," he said quietly. "What is this one about? Rats?"

"Well, not 'xackly rats," she replied slowly. "It's a sort of queer story. I heard it last term, an' that 'minds me this is the last of August—an' the holidays will soon be over."

"But we won't discuss that," interrupted Chris hastily, with a glance at Reggie's suddenly pallid face. "And it's a far cry to the twenty-first of September anyway."

Reggie drew himself against his cushions with a quivering sigh. The twenty-first of September. He felt as if the bottom had fallen out of his new universe, the gaily whirling world of pleasure in which he had lived for the last five weeks.

He remembered something Chris had said to him about little determinations, just sufficient determination to carry him through the day. He

prayed inwardly to the new and strange yet so familiar Friend that Chris so often talked of to him, for just enough determination to forget what Dearlove had said. To put aside the cold, blank, horrible future where his friends would leave him when they went back to the radiant happy world in which they moved. He bent forward, eagerly waiting for the story, struggling with a weight of tears that would well over in his eyes.

Ganpa looked over the top of his *Times*, and noted the pale little face, with the blue veins showing so painfully distinct in the temples, wondering a little sadly at its tragic loveliness—a tragedy that had come with such extraordinary suddenness as to look like metamorphosis more than the same face. The charm of that little thin countenance was its changefulness—the loveliness was but reflections from the soul beneath.

“It will be hard,” thought Ganpa, with a little tightening of his throat, “to leave him—I wonder—I wonder why the lad has gained such a hold on me?” Perhaps it was the brave battle the little crippled lad waged with his weakness. Perhaps it was the magnetic appeal of the straight beautiful soul, to be seen through its disguising garment of thinning flesh. Whatever it was, Ganpa was conscious of a distinct disinclination to leave

Reggie at all—a determination to “think this over and see if something can’t be done about it.”

And Reggie, without knowing this at all, and all unconscious of Ganpa’s scrutiny, was somehow all at once comforted.

Dearlove had looked hurriedly from Chris, when he spoke, to Reggie, and become aware of the impending shadow. She drew herself nearer to the little lad’s feet, and took one of his hands in her own, and sat there thinking for a while.

“It’s weeks!” she remarked cheerfully, and subsided again into silence.

Chris sat reading and smoking, glancing furtively now and again, at the two children. Mamie thought how pretty a picture they made. Nesta came softly out with the cup of milk, bent over Reggie and kissed him on the forehead, as she gave it into his hands, then sat down on the grass beside Dearlove, the sunlight playing in her pretty hair.

The peace, the quietness, the love with which he was surrounded, sank deep in the crippled child’s heart, and filled it to overflowing. A strange idea possessed his. The lonely years would never matter. He would have all this beauty and affection to remember. No matter where his lines lay, he would always think of this and be happy. It was his own now. He dumbly

thanked the Friend of his Soul, whom Chris called "Master," for it. He must have planned it, thought Reggie, for it was all such familiar happiness, a something that had always been his, and into which he had fallen silently and imperceptibly, as if it had been awaiting him

Nesta gazing up at him, averted her eyes suddenly; the child looked as if he might dissolve away into thin air—he was so spiritual, so lovely, so lovable.

And Dearlove, without warning, rushed all at once, as was her fashion, into the story.

"Once upon a time——" She caught herself up hastily for correction. "No, I don't mean that, it isn't a once-upon-a-time story. It's peffecly true. A nun told me it, an' you may believe it all. I asked her, an' that's what she said, even if her eyes did laugh all the time she was sayin' it. I think myself it simply must be true."

"All right," said Chris encouragingly; "speaking for myself I'll believe all I can—but I can't be responsible for the opinions of the family."

Dearlove's smiling eyes glanced up at Reggie. "You will?" she inquired.

"I will believe every word," he replied fervently. "Wait till I finish my milk, Dearlove."

He drank it all, and gave back the cup to Nesta,

who placed it beside the chair, and begged Dearlove to proceed.

"Very well," resumed Dearlove graciously, "I'm beginnin' again. It's a story 'bout the French 'Evolution."

"Whew," whistled Chris with raised brows. "Rats! Headsman—'Evolution—I anticipate this story, Dearlove, with er—enthusiasm."

"One day in the French 'Evolution," continued Dearlove, with a polite toleration of this interruption, "a man—a sort of nobleman I think he was in disguise—was walkin' in a street, an' there he saw crouchin' on a doorstep a most beautiful young face——"

"Good!" encouraged Chris joyfully, "beautiful young face, is distinctly good! This is the real thing: shocks and shivers. Go on."

"I will if you'll let me," remarked Dearlove with some acerbity, "but if you—how can I go on if you 'terrupt me all the time?"

"I think," advised Ganpa, "it would be wise to ignore him. I'm listening. He doesn't really count."

"Well, he saw this young lady in the 'lectric light," continued Dearlove slightly mollified. "Chris, how can I tell a story with you goin' on like that?"

"I was only goin' to suggest that you make it

gas," recommended Chris meekly. "Gas, Dearlove, or the moon. The moon for choice, because though it may appear a mere trifle to you, it may give your critics occasion to blaspheme. They will smite you, Dearlove, hip and thigh, so to speak. Neither gas, nor yet electricity, were invented yet for street use I mean. The moon I pray you—the moon!"

"Oh, very well," agreed Dearlove, wearily and crossly, "you *are* piticular! He saw her in the moonlight, an' he was most awful sorry for her; she was very pale. An' all this nobleman's people had been 'evolutionized, so he was rather lonely. An' he said to her, 'Don't sit on that cold doorstep; if you will come home to my housekeeper, an' make some dresses, I will marry you if you like.' So she told him she was very sad, for all her people had been 'evolutionized too, an' she had a sort of little whisperin' voice, an' her eyes were sort of blue. An' she had no home, an no money, an' nowhere to go. So they went together to the old home an' got married, an' they were simply frightfully, frantically happy for a long while. But she always got the most terrible sort of faintin' fits an' she got them everywhere, an' every day, so he used to think she was goin' to die, it took him such hours an' hours to wake her up again. An' wherever she went, she used to

wear round her neck a little ribbon of black velvet, an' she had a most white neck.

"So the doctor said she ought to be distracted, for she must be thinkin' of her people that were all 'evolutionized, an' he said she must go to balls, an' parties, an' the theatre. So he took her to a ball, an' when they came home she went off in a most dead faint, so he rushed to the bathroom, an' he was in such a hurry that he must have got the wrong tap, anyway he brought warm water, an' poured it all over her, an' tore off her m'gnificent jewel'ry so her neck got all soakin' wet, an' her dress an' all. An he tore her lace off an' the velvet ribbon round her neck, that she never, never, never took off. An' what do you think happened?"

She rose and stood before Reggie's chair, her lips demurely closed, her eyes sparkling, and the wind blowing her long brown hair towards him.

"I don't know," whispered Reggie. "What?"

"Her complexion melted," suggested Chris stolidly; "that's what usually happens after a ball."

"Poof!" scoffed Dearlove contemptuously.

"She was always most pale."

"Perhaps the pallor came off?" hazarded Ganpa curiously.

"You're all wrong," cried Dearlove magnifi-

cently. Then stooping towards Reggie she said in a deep thrilling monotone, "*Her head came off!*"

"My good land!" exclaimed Chris in surprise.

"How do you account for that?"

"Strange!" murmured Ganpa, "very!"

"Well, you see," explained Dearlove, enjoying the surprise of her audience, "she had been 'evolutionized too. But there was a doctor, an' he took her head an' put it on again when it was warm. So it kind of stuck, an' then he tied the velvet ribbon on to hide the mark, an' told her never, never, to let anybody take it off, or to wash her in warm water. But when her husband poured warm water over her, it must have all come sort of unstuck again, an' so her poor head fell off."

Reggie looked at her with a puzzled expression.

"But how did she come alive again Dearlove? She must have died when they cut her head off."

"And how could she walk about and be distracted if she only had her head tied on?" added Chris critically. "Tell me that now?"

"It—it——" began Dearlove lamely. "You know."

"I don't," remarked Chris, with an added superciliousness, "but I'd like to—for instance, why did her head fall off, if it were properly medically put on?"

"It wasn't properly tied, that's why," said Dearlove.

"What I don't understand," said Reggie hesitatingly, "is—is how she walked about with it only tied on. Was she, Dearlove—was she dead?"

"Of course not," cried Dearlove. "Why should she be?"

"It is usual for people to die when their heads are cut off," suggested Ganpa kindly.

"Although," continued Chris, "it is possible for people to lose their heads and yet keep them on."

"That's what she did," remarked Dearlove happily. "Perhaps she was dead before."

"And after—evidently," added Chris, with a melancholy eye, "Poor lady!"

"I really won't tell you any more stories, Chris," she retorted tearfully, "you are so ridic'lous. Ganpa, did you think that story int'restin'?"

"Most interesting, Dearlove," said Ganpa warmly, "and most unusual."

"Haunting sort of thing—properly speaking a problem story. Puzzle, was she dead with her head on, or head with her dead off?"

Dearlove flushed, and going over to him, pulled his collar straight, then shook him violently.

"Reggie," she said, returning still more flushed with her exertions, and a trifle out of breath, "I

forgot to tell you, but I've got two such darlin' kittens. The milkman brought them. One is so cheeky. He walked out of the basket an' sat down in cook's chair. So I called him Sit-down-Johnson—Johnson is a man in a book, who never washed his face for three months. An' the other kitten mewed; I called her Ups-a-Daisy."

"Sensible names," commented Chris, forgetting his recent discipline; "sort of thing you could say in a hurry. Try it, Reggie. Sit-down-Johnson!"

Barbara came out on the grass and announced luncheon, and he lifted Reggie laughing out of the chair, to carry him in.

CHAPTER XIII

ON BRINGING THE ANGELS TO REASON

“THE kittens’ mother has come to see them,” announced Dearlove in a tone of glad surprise, rushing into the pretty little chintz-hung room, where Chris and Mamie were engaged in teaching Reggie the game and play of chess. He had been getting on after a fashion that fairly astonished his tutors, when Dearlove came in on them, like a whirlwind of scarlet and golden brown, and paused, panting breathlessly.

Chris regarded her with an air of absent reproof. “I wish,” he said plaintively, “you wouldn’t rush into the bosom of your family like that—such a disconcerting pace! Upsets my nerves. Come gently, Dearlove, like the sweet zephyrs at eve.”

“I don’t know if you know it,” responded Dearlove, after a swift glance at the board, “but it’s your move, an’ your fannin’ yourself with the

Queen. Reggie, the mother cat is a duckie-darlin; she took Sit-down-Johnson, an' put her foot on his ear, so's she could keep him down while she washed his face, an' she did box Ups-a-Daisy's ears, for going on the table."

"But who brought her?" asked Mamie.

"Oh, nobody brought her," returned Dearlove with a look of ecstasy, "that's what's so awful clever about her: she followed the milkman, an' she's not a friend of the milkman's either; she only saw him through a crack in the door takin' away her children. So she simply came after him. Animals are frantically clever—'specially cats."

"That's so strange—er," agreed Chris, shaking his head gravely, "the things I've heard of cats!"

"What sort of things?" inquired Dearlove eagerly, then as if recollecting something she drew back and looked at him suspiciously, her brown head on one side.

"I like your stories 'bout animals," she remarked tentatively, "but the last one, Chris, I simply couldn't believe; you know you'll have an awful purgatory if you tell 'em like that, p'haps you'll have to be an animal yourself."

Chris lay back in his chair, thrusting his thumbs

in the armholes of his waistcoat, and puffed out his chest indignantly.

"And who is it lures me on?" he inquired in a deep voice. "Whose insatiable hunger and curiosity impels me to risk my immortal welfare in gratifying its demands? Who was it told me my animals were dull, and forced me out of the natural kingdom in search of the marvellous. Who was it urged me to invent the things animals ought to do, but don't? Don't pour scorn on my noble efforts, Dearlove, or my back will be up."

Dearlove hastened to apologise for a mistaken impression.

"Oh, I like them well enough, Chris," she assured him quickly. "It isn't that I don't like them. But really, now, I think you mightn't tell stories that couldn't happen—like that about the snake an' the tourist with the umbrella."

"Sharper than a serpent's tooth 'tis to have an ungrateful boon-companion," lamented Chris in sorrowful accents. "It wasn't a snake, Dearlove. It was an alligator."

"But you 'istinctly said snake."

"I may," acknowledged Chris, "have been betrayed into using one word for the other—I do sometimes, when I'm pre-occupied, but I

meant alligator, so that's all right. 'No matter what you do if your heart be true—And his heart was true to Poll'—I mean the alligator.'

Reggie exploded into amused laughter, Ganpa awoke in his armchair and laughed too. Even Mamie was impelled to mirth by the amazed indignation in Dearlove's flushed countenance.

"Well," she remarked blankly. "I'm——"

Chris held up a peremptory finger.

"You're not——" he interrupted blandly. "On no account, Dearlove! You are simply forbidden to be blown."

"Well, it's jolly hard lines!" she began woefully. "If you want to say an awful lot, an' you're not allowed to say anything—I *must* say something."

"Think of something ladylike and refined," advised Chris cheerfully.

"What's the good of bein' ladylike? It doesn't make you feel any better inside," she complained bitterly. "I'll say 'Scott'—there!"

"Suppose," suggested Ganpa, "you tell us what the point of issue between you is. In what story was it Chris overstepped the bounds of probability?"

"I don't know what p'obability is," responded Dearlove with gloom, "but it was an awful whopper."

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"Do tell me," begged Ganpa. "I would like immensely to hear it."

"Do," urged Chris in mock despair, "reveal the secret outpourings of my poetic soul ____,"

She nodded emphatically at him, closing her pretty lips determinedly.

"I'm goin' to," she said. "Now Reggie I ask you if it could possibly happen? Just you listen and tell us."

Reggie turned round, and folded his arms on the back of his chair, dropping his chin on them, and laughing over at her, for the moment just a little boy, surpassingly sweet and beautiful, with no tinge of tragedy in him at all.

"I'll tell you," he responded alertly; "please begin."

"And I do hope," murmured Mamie, fingering the pawns, "it is an edifying story."

"Well, it's rather su'prisin' sort of story," observed Dearlove practically. "I'll tell you, I asked Chris this mornin' when we were on the rocks. We were catchin' prawns, an' he told me crayfish an' lobsters were only prawns grown up, an' hardened in their ways, through bein' caught an' put in buckets an' things by little boys an' girls. So we made a pool away high in the rocks so's I could keep them there, an' watch them

growin' up. An' we rather liked watchin' them. So I said he might tell me a story, so he told me a story, an' it was 'bout a tourist, who went out with a party into the Great Sandy Desert. An' he took an umbrella tent, an' a c'lapsible fire in a little bag, an' a bull-dog. I don't care for bull-dogs much, their legs are so wavy, but they bite most frantically hard. One day, the tourist took his tent an' the bag an' the dog, an' went out for a walk by himself, an' he never came back. An' they waited an' waited, an' he never came back. So the party said to each other : ' This Johnnie's gone an' lost himself, let's go an' look for him.' So they went off an' looked all over the Great Sandy Desert, an' they simply couldn't find him.

" But they saw a huge snake crawlin', an' they were frightened, for he had fire comin' out of his mouth, an' smoke. An' the party thought p'haps it might be a dragon. At first they all ran away, but afterwards they came back, an' shot with their guns at it, an' killed it dead. Then they saw a 'normous bulge in the middle of it, an' one of the party said, ' Let's cut him open an' see what that bulge means.' So they did, an' it was the tourist, an' he was sittin' under his umbrella tent, an' cookin' chunks off the inside of the snake for his dog. An' when the man

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looked in through the hole at him, he said, ' Hallo, old man ! foggy sort of weather isn't it ? '

" You see," explained Chris meekly, " he was asleep when the snake—alligator, I mean, swallowed him. I call that a downright good yarn. Anybody might believe it."

Dearlove listened with an air of judicial calm. " What I want to know, Ganpa," she remarked quietly, " is, could that possibly happen ? "

" It might," assented Ganpa, " possibly, if the snake were large enough, an' the man was willing, but it must have had a comprehensive swallow to take in the dog and tent. But Chris says it was an alligator, so that's all right. Alligators will swallow anything."

" Well, how could he light a fire inside it ? " she asked unhappily ; " it must have hurt it awfully."

" It was a patent collapsible fire, I understand," said Ganpa. " But all this has taken us away from the cat and her kittens. I am sure you came in to discourse on kittens and cats. Didn't you now ? "

Dearlove sat down at his feet, and crossing her legs, caught a foot in each hand, after an odd little trick of her own, when she was considering anything very seriously.

" I did rather," she replied gravely, and thought

deeply for a few minutes, evidently on the late subject of conversation, her eyes fixed on Chris.

"Well," she concluded abruptly, "I'm rather sorry for the snake—alligator, I mean. I should simply hate to have anybody light a fire inside me—some animals do suffer a lot."

"They do," sighed Chris. "Sambo now?"

But Dearlove did not hear him: she was again deep in thought

"I can't imagine," she burst out suddenly, "what the angels are thinking about sometimes. Mother Monica told me God loves little girls, an' young animals, an' just see what He lets be done to them: 'specially girls. Do you know the Chinese put all their little girl babies—p'haps not quite all, but nearly, out in the street, an' the nuns go round, an' pick them up, an' take them to the Convent and care for them. I think the Chinese must be simply horrid. Then there's cats. Nearly every cat has her kittens taken away an' destroyed. They throw them into the sea in a bag. I do hope the mermaids take them down under the sea, an' let them run about—cats love fish, so they'd be happy enough there—just the way the nuns take the Chinese babies. I hate the Chinese, they eat puppies too."

She sat for a space rubbing her nose thought-

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fully, then went on with considerable vexation in her tone—

“I wish to goodness the angels wouldn’t take so many babies to the Chinese. I’m always buyin’ babies from the nuns. I think I must have about twenty-five, an’ I don’t even know their names. I do hate makin’ little shirts, an’ I never have a penny for anything, when I’ve paid for the babies, an’ all the fines. If people didn’t bring me sweets I’d never see one. This term I know I shall have to buy some more. They cost a shillin’ an’ you have to send pennies to feed them. Twenty-five babies is enough.”

“How many more do you propose to buy?” inquired Chris with great interest.

“I don’t know,” returned Dearlove dolefully. “Plenty of girls say they can’t afford them, so they gen’ally say, ‘Oh, you must take them, Philomena, you haven’t to share your pocket money,’ so I’ve got to take them.”

“It’s a mercy they’re in China,” ventured Mamie thankfully.

Dearlove shook her head emphatically. “No!” she cried. “Mamie, I wouldn’t mind if I ever saw them, or even knew their names, but it is slack makin’ twenty-five shirts for children you don’t know.”

"There was a young woman of Peter Port"
said Chris solemnly,

"Who went in for babies of every sort.
Be they large or small, she would purchase them all,
And joyfully make them a shirt."

"No." Dearlove denied the latter part of this brilliant effusion distinctly. "No, I don't make shirts joyfully. But what I want to know is, how can you let the angels know they oughtn't to take the Chinese so many babies?"

Chris bent forward with a red chessman between finger and thumb, his face illumined by some fine idea. Reggie began to chuckle in anticipation; that twinkle in his friend's eye meant prolonged discussion between him and Dearlove.

"I have it!" cried Chris. "Write to these nuns in China, and make a suggestion to them. There are too many kittens, and too many babies That is obvious. Let the superfluous babies be fed upon the superfluous kittens and all will be well. We've got to open those angels' eyes somehow."

Dearlove received this startling proposal with unmitigated horror. Her eyes grew extraordinarily blue, her face pale, her lips dropped apart, but no word came, for quite a long time.

"Oh, Chris," she said in a dazed way, presently,

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"I couldn't believe you are so cruel. The sweet, dear little kittens."

"And the sweet, dear little babies," added Chris quickly. "When the angels see them thus devouring each other, their eyes will be opened to a sense of the enormity of taking them where they're not wanted. The promiscuous bestowal of kittens, likewise babies, is to be discouraged. By your own showing there are far too many of both."

Dearlove pondered over this aspect of the question for some time before replying; it evidently struck her as worthy of some consideration, in spite of its terrors. Presently she relaxed from her solemnity to turn to her mother.

"Mamie," she asked feebly, "how many kittens do you think a baby would eat?"

"Now that's a sensible way of looking at it," encouraged Chris; "you might add, how they'd eat them—*à la Nature*, or in their jackets raw, cold or boiled."

"Oh!" begged Dearlove distractedly, "don't talk like that Chris. It's simply horrid! Think of my poor Ups-a-Daisy, an' my darlin' Sit-down-Johnson."

"Come now, Mamie," urged Chris, in nowise disconcerted by this appeal, "speak up."

"I—I——" stammered Mamie, "I don't know really, Dearlove. The only baby I was ever inti-

mately acquainted with was brought up on milk. But I must confess she would have eaten the cat if she had a good chance. Anyway, she tried it."

"There you are now!" exclaimed Chris triumphantly. "Shows that babies have a natural inclination for kitten—or cat."

Dearlove looked up at him mutinously.

"I simply can't believe that," she said in a downright manner. "There is a dear baby down the street, an' I see him sittin' every day on the doorstep, in a basket thing, with the cat beside him. An' he is always eatin' his shoe. Well, I'm sure it can't be very nice, 'specially if his little sister has been walkin' him up an' down in the mud. Muddy leather can't be nice."

"Babies," pronounced Ganpa oracularly, "will eat anything. When Chris was a baby he tried to eat me."

"That was downright love of my species; you should have turned me on to kittens and you would have seen what I was really capable of," said Chris. "But as you say, babies will eat anything. Nesta tried to eat a Noah's Ark, and some hundreds of painted animals."

Dearlove heaved a sigh of relief. "I'm awful glad," she remarked, rising and going over to Mamie. "I should hate them to like kittens best.

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Mamie, do you like sort of velvety black cats with white gloves an' shoes ? ”

“ Yes,” answered her mother, “ I think I do. Your move, Reggie.”

“ I'm so glad ! ” said Dearlove inconsequently. “ You were goin' to have roast duck for dinner, but the kittens' mother took it on the top of the dresser, an' crunched it. Barbara couldn't reach it. An' it did growl, just like a thunderstorm. She can't have duck often, I think—but she is a dear ! ”

CHAPTER XIV

THE BLIGHTED SEA-PERSON

“**D**O you see that poor man sittin’ up there by the crabpool ? ” asked Dearlove. “ Poor man, he does look so sad ! ”

Reggie looked up from the fascinating study of pale green and crimson sea-grass, and scrutinized the man with dreamy eyes. The dream died out in sudden apprehension and surprise. “ Why, it’s Jem,” he exclaimed blankly. “ What can be the matter with him ? ”

“ Who’s Jem ? ” questioned Dearlove, pausing bucket in hand in the middle of her particular pool among the rocks.

“ Oh, he’s a friend of Paddy’s—Paddy’s particular friend, in fact.” He dusted the sand off his small person, and went over to the stranger. “ How do you do, Jem ? ”

Jem was sitting propped against the rocks, gazing out to sea, in an attitude and expression of

utter gloom. He looked up when Reggie greeted him, shook his head dejectedly, and returned to his joyless musing.

He was a bronzed and ruddy-faced young man of about thirty, with a seafaring air, and a curiously smart and dapper appearance about his blue serge clothes, in spite of their evident carelessness. He was, on the face of it, a person who was accustomed to regard things with cheerfulness and good spirits. But some strange catastrophe had caused him to swerve aside from the even tenor of his way, and plunged him into depths of dark despair. Reggie scarcely recognized him.

"I hope," he began timidly, creeping a little nearer—"I do hope, Jem, nothing has happened to you?"

Jem shook his head speechlessly, and continued to gaze seawards, his brown face set and hard, his under-jaw working mechanically with a queer sidelong movement that distressed Reggie terribly.

He sat down on a flat rock facing him, his little face grown pinched and wan. There was a something about Jem that frightened him inwardly, why he could hardly tell—an impending terror and desolation. Perhaps his extraordinary spirituality and perception divined the black thought surging in the man's brain.

Dearlove having hastily let down her skirts, stepped out of the pool, and flew to add her quota of sympathy. She looked at Paddy's friend with an anxious mind.

"I hope you aren't feelin' bad, or anythin'," she ventured timorously. It was not exactly characteristic of Dearlove to be timorous, but there was a hint of something in Jem's light hazel eyes that made her slightly nervous.

"Do tell us," she urged, "if we can do anythin' for you."

Jem shook his head, and groaned hollowly. Reggie put out a hand in acute distress; the sound hurt him.

"I'm so sorry," he whispered. "What is it, Jem—not Ellen?"

"Do tell us," urged Dearlove passionately; "if you tell a thing that's hurtin' you awf'ly to a person or two that's sort of sorry, it's ever so much easier after."

Jem looked darkly from one eager childish face to the other; the gloom lifted a little, he sighed deeply, and passed a hand over his face.

"It's no good, miss, thank you kindly, to tell anybody—no good at all. Master Reggie, she's chucked me. I said I'd stand it no longer. 'Take me,' says I to her, 'or leave me, Ellen Davis'—

an' she chucked me straight, after five year faithful and true."

Reggie shrank backwards against Dearlove's arm.

"That's bad," he said, blanching as he spoke. "I'm sorry, Jem. But you know Paddy felt as bad as you do now, an' he said afterwards he was jolly well thankful he *had* been chucked."

"Who chucked him?" asked Dearlove anxiously. "Not Barbara, Reggie?"

"No," he assured her hastily, colouring crimson as he did so. "Not Barbara."

"Well, I'm jolly glad to hear that," replied Dearlove in a tone of immense relief, "'cause Barbara is awful fond of him."

"An' that," pursued Jem dejectedly, as if this interlude had passed him unheeded by, "that's as you might say the difference betwixt us, Master Reggie, for Paddy he didn't care a row of pins, so to speak, for Moll; but Ellen Davis an' me's been walkin' out these five year, an' I love her true."

"Oh!" commented Dearlove blankly, "then why won't she be friends with you?"

"Because, miss," explained Jem, with the quiet of great despair, "because I ain't got all me limbs. One of me legs is in South Africar; bein' in South Africar, it ain't no use to walk about on

'ere. When a chap's right leg's in Ladysmith, he can't go to church on it in St. Peter Port. 'Go,' says she, 'and git another leg. *I ain't a-goin'* to church with no old dot an' carry one; no old timber toes for me,' she says, 'not much! *I ain't goin'* to give the garrison the laugh on me. Go an' get another leg.' Well she knows, miss, that there couldn't be; if one leg's here, so to speak, an' the other there, timber is the only thing for it—a man can't 'op."

"Of course he can't," agreed Dearlove warmly. "An' I must say, I think it's pe'fecly horrid of her to talk like that to a brave soldier, though pe'haps you aren't a soldier?"

Jem Hayne shook his head with a suggestion of pity for her evident ignorance.

"No, miss," he said; "belong to the Senior Service, miss—H.M.S. *Turr'ble*. Ladysmith did for me."

There was a brief silence in which Jem Hayne resumed his survey of the coast of Herm lying like Hy-Brazil, gleaming softly across the splash of the blue waves. Then Dearlove began: "Did she say those things in a temper?" she asked happily, "or did she say them sort of quiet an' calm?"

Jem regarded her with aroused interest, and seemed reflecting.

"Pe'haps," suggested Dearlove in conclusion, "she was mad. When you're mad you simply don't care what you say; then you're so sorry afterwards. Do you think she's about gettin' sorry now?"

Jem nipped a groan in the bud. "Not much," he said grimly. "She'll marry Smith, an' so I told her. Money is what she wants."

Dearlove opened her eyes widely. "Oh!" she asked blankly. "Money—haven't you got any?"

A flicker of amusement stole over Jem's bronzed features, as he met her look.

"Well," he acknowledged, "I've got some, an' a little bit o' a farm. But what's a farm to a man that's bin brought up to the sea, when the wife he wants fires him? An' what's money to a blighted 'eart? I takes no pride in what I've got. I can't sleep, an' I takes no interest in me vittals. Master Reggie, I wish!" his eye travelled from the wooden stump showing stark in the soft sand to the two eager little faces, bright with sympathy for his woes, and he checked the words almost on his lips. He took off his cap, and wiped his forehead. "Lord forgive me!" he murmured below his breath, "the blessed inner-cents!" He waved a hand tragically towards the wooden stump. "'Get another leg,' says

she. Master Reggie, there's no gettin' over that. For 'ow can I get another? 'Tain't in reason. It's Smith she's after. An' that blessed sky-pilot up there, says he, 'Your limbs will all be restored to you in 'eaving'; what d'ye think o' that, miss?"

Dearlove carefully pondered over the matter for a space.

"Oh, of course," she thought, "legs won't matter so very much when you've got wings; but I don't think even three legs would make up for doin' without one down here."

"Right you are, miss!" Jem's face suddenly twinkled into laughter. "Three legs wouldn't—an' that's a fact—an' somehow I can't fancy myself in wings."

He burst into a sudden roar, and scrambled to his feet. "Wings!" he repeated, "an' the wooden leg an' all." He held his blue cap in his hands, and looked at the children with brilliant eyes. "There's some," he said softly, "that's sent without the wings. Mornin', sir, mornin', miss—thankee kindly."

Dearlove and Reggie regarded each other blankly for an instant, then watched him stumping upwards to the road. To a big muscular man like Jem, that wooden limb must be purgatory.

"What sort of person is Miss Davis?" inquired

Dearlove eagerly. "I mean is she a sort of slap an' scold, an' then kiss an' cry person?"

Reggie laughed softly. "I don't know how you found it out," he said, "but that's exactly what she is."

"Do you think," pursued Dearlove anxiously, "that she really loves Jem?"

Reggie puckered his faintly pencilled brows in an effort to determine justly the state of Miss Davis's affections in regard to Joe.

"She's a quartermaster's daughter," he answered slowly, "and she makes dresses for the officers' wives. She is most awfully kind to me, Dearlove. Mary says she's most awfully fond of him, but she's got a quick temper, and she's very pretty; Jem rather worries her."

"But if he *did* get a really nice leg," went on Dearlove tentatively.

"Then I think it would be all right, but it's impossible. It's simply because they chaff her about his having a wooden one. She came over and cried the other night because her father made fun of Jem after he was gone."

"What a shame!" cried Dearlove hotly. "All the same she's silly. Oh, do come up the street with me, Reggie! I want to go into the shop where Ganpa gets his specs mended. Give me your net."

She took his net and carefully emptied it, put it below one arm, and hooked Reggie into the other, and having assisted him over the slippery rocks, they set up the steep narrow little street together, only pausing five minutes or so, at the picture shop, while Reggie feasted his eyes on some beautiful little sketches displayed for sale.

They arrived eventually outside the optician's, and Dearlove pointed out to Reggie that seeing there were all kinds of surgical appliances, and artificial hands and feet, one might reasonably suppose a supply of legs inside.

Dearlove entered, and a pink-faced old gentleman wearing gold-rimmed spectacles came in obedience to the sharp tinkle of the door bell.

"How do you do, Mr. Gaynor?" began Dearlove politely.

Mr. Gaynor beamed down on her through his spectacles, thinking she was about as like a wild rose as any little girl could well be. "How do you do, miss?" he replied.

These polite amenities being exchanged, she forthwith entered on her business.

"I see," she continued tentatively, "you have hands and feet in the window, so I was wondering if you sold legs too. Do you?"

Mr. Gaynor gave utterance to a quick little gasp, looked at her over his spectacles, as if

debating whether he had heard aright, then pushed them up for a better view of her.

"Do you?" repeated Dearlove very anxiously.

"We—er—yes, we have supplied them."

"I think," went on Dearlove suggestively, "I'd rather like to see some."

"Is it for——?" Mr. Gaynor from being pink suddenly became scarlet.

"Oh no!" anticipated Dearlove practically. "it's not for myself exactly. It's for a—a Sea-person—who got one cut off in South Africa. I think from the look of him he might be a hero, but he didn't tell us. How much do legs cost?"

Mr. Gaynor put a hand to his mouth, and coughed slightly. Coughed again, his eyes watering behind the replaced spectacles. "Artificial limbs," he said tremulously, "run to money, miss; but we do happen to have—one—we could let you have—cheap."

He concluded the sentence with some difficulty. Reggie began to wonder if he also was suffering from blight. The symptoms were peculiar.

"What do you call cheap?" inquired Dearlove judiciously.

"Well, miss," returned Mr. Gaynor, "the materials of this particular limb cost ten pounds—but say eight—five—to oblige a lady."

She plunged into calculation, counting rapidly

on her slim fingers, breathing hard the while, her eyes staring vacantly through the glass case in front of her.

"I haven't got five," she said suddenly, abruptly finishing adding up. "Only four pounds seventeen and five farthings. Unless you'll wait till next month, or Ganpa will give me my Christmas ten shillin's."

"I think," began Mr. Gaynor with great seriousness, "we might possibly meet you, miss, in this matter. The—er—limb has been a long while in stock; the demand is not so very great."

"Then," decided Dearlove quickly, "I rather think I'll take it. But I would like to see it first, please."

Mr. Gaynor's expression of serious consideration suddenly deserted him, he bent towards the counter, murmuring softly to himself. Then he straightened again, and seeing the consternation in the two young faces across from him, said liquidly—

"Do you think you will understand it, miss?"

"'Course I will," Dearlove flashed indignantly, at the idea of her not understanding. She was buying, and it is customary to see what you buy.

"Chris says never to buy a pig in a poke," she informed Reggie loftily, "so I do not see why

anybody should buy a leg in a case. Please show it to us, Mr. Gaynor."

Mr. Gaynor had listened to this last phrase of wisdom with his hands on the case. A long curiously shaped thing, resembling an exaggerated violin case, which he had placed before them on the counter.

Reggie stood on tip-toe to look at it. Dearlove's eyes glowed with cheerful anticipation.

"Look at it here, miss," inquired Mr. Gaynor absently, growing suddenly scarlet again, "or have it sent up?"

Dearlove turned the proposition carefully over in her mind.

"I rather think," she confided to Reggie, "it would be a good thing for Chris to see it. He knows so much about things like this sort." She turned swiftly to the waiting Mr. Gaynor.

"The only thing," she said emphatically, "that I would like to be sure about is—is it a good walkin' leg, because the one he has left seems to be a rather quick one. An' I wouldn't like ours to be left behin'."

Mr. Gaynor bowed to her, till his nose nearly touched the counter. He recovered his uprightness with some struggle. "Beg pardon, miss," he said indistinctly, "did you say——?" and all at once speech seemed to desert him.

"I said," repeated Dearlove with additional emphasis, "is it a good walker—for walkin' you know—on the roads an' places?"

"Oh Lord!" ejaculated Mr. Gaynor irrelevantly. "Oh Lord!" and the tears began to pour down his scarlet cheeks.

Dearlove eyed him in trepidation.

"I won't trouble you to show it to me," she went on with great dignity, but considerable haste, "if you'd rather not. Pe'haps you're not well, or somethin'. But could you just tell me—is it a good walker?"

Two childish eager faces looked up at him, waiting the answer. Mr. Gaynor stood with a working countenance regarding them. At length he spoke.

"We don't guarantee our artificial limbs to be the real thing," he stammered weakly, "but so far as appearances go——" and he came to a pause, and struggled with his feelings vainly.

"What's the use of it then?" deplored Dearlove. "Haven't you got any *walkin'* legs?"

"Dearlove," interrupted Reggie quickly, "remember it was the look of the wooden thing she objected to; if people didn't know they couldn't say things, you see."

"Course,"—she veered quickly to his point of

view. "That's it, Reggie. She's simply 'shamed of it. I said she was horrid."

She looked up again at Mr. Gaynor, and paralysed him with another question.

"Anyhow it will *look* real. Could anybody mistake it for a real leg, Mr. Gaynor?"

"I think—er—very possibly, miss."

Mr. Gaynor's voice was very faint, and he showed indications of great exhaustion.

"We'll make him try it on, an' if she likes it pe'haps she'll marry him, an' all will be merry as a marriage bell. We'll call in an' let you know, Mr. Gaynor."

"Thank you, miss."

Mr. Gaynor having got thus far, suddenly collapsed into a devout attitude before the counter, his hands joined before his face, his whole frame trembling with suppressed emotion.

The children regarded him with suspicious eyes, and hurriedly withdrew themselves, to discuss his extraordinary conduct during the transaction. Passing the window they were much too polite to look in, but they heard him distinctly from within.

"Oh Lord!" cried Mr. Gaynor in pitiful accents. "Oh Lord!"

Dearlove gazed with mystified expression at her friend, who reflected her bewilderment in his pathetic eyes.

"I wonder," soliloquized Dearlove, "if he happens to be a Plymouther. My Aunt Selina—not my real aunt, but my sort of distant aunt—is a Plymouther. The spirit moves her, an' she prays I mayn't be so fond of red, an' chocolates, an' pantomimes."

"Hallo!" cried a big mellow voice. "Hallo, my merry men all! Whither away? Reggie, how far have you walked?"

Reggie's face suddenly became radiant; he looked shyly up with adoring eyes.

"Only from the rocks," he said proudly. "Not too far, Chris."

"Then you must ride the rest of the way," decided Chris quickly. "Up!"

He lifted the tiny figure in his arms, and they went down together to the church in search of a chair.

CHAPTER XV

THE SEA-PERSON'S MISS DAVIS

CHRIS carried Reggie down to the church, where the chairstand was critically inspected from end to end by Dearlove. After considerable discussion of their respective merits, she selected a dark red chair, drawn by a ragged white pony. The driver opened the little doors, and Chris installed his fragile burden carefully in one corner, while Dearlove bestowed herself with a huge sigh of satisfaction in the other.

"Oh, Chris!" she cried suddenly, with her hand on the half-shut door, "I do wish you could grow down enough to squeeze in between Reggie an' me. You know these little carriages make me think I'm goin' to a fairies' ball. Oh! I wish I could go to a fairies' ball." She turned eagerly to the driver, standing expectant beside her. "Do you know about any fairies in Guernsey?" she asked. "Please don't say no, because I simply

know there are. Cause these carriages were used to be made for them. Weren't they now?"

The man smiled broadly and scratched his head with the butt of his whip.

"Noo," he answered; "these chairs, p'tite missee, were made so, because they didn't have no roads to Guernsey in old toimes—lanes they had—not wide enough for the big carriages, so they went in these chairs, after the sedans went out o' fashion."

"Sedans," shrieked Dearlove enthusiastically.

"Oh, can I go in a sedan?"

"We don't be usin' any of them now," ventured the driver, laughing outright; "but these chairs, missee, be the next best thing."

"Well, then, let us start," she suggested, sobering a little. "Why don't we go on in our fairy coach, Chris?"

Chris beamed down on them from his lordly altitude, and fastened the little doors.

"We must wait for Mamie and Nesta," he said; "they will be here at twelve, and as it is three minutes to that time we must wait. Then we can all go home together, like Brown's cows."

"Brown?" echoed Dearlove, with an accent of suspicion. "Who is Brown?"

"A man I met once," replied Chris carelessly.

"How many cows had he?" asked Dearlove curiously.

"So far as I could see—alas! but one."

"One cow!" she said incredulously. "Then how could it go home together. Chris you are ung'ammatical."

"Sorry," apologized Chris, with his pipe between his teeth, "but the fact remains."

"I don't understand," ventured Reggie cautiously. "Is it a joke, Chris?"

"Well," sighed Chris regretfully. "It was hardly a joke at the time, old man, but I dare say it is one, of a sort."

"It's a story," cried Dearlove joyfully. "Chris, let us wile away the time happily till Mamie an' Nesta come. Is it a war story?"

"It is, in a way," conceded Chris. He leaned up against the church wall, out of the sun, the crowd ran up and down the long flight of grey stone steps beyond them, and round the corner was a glimpse of the tall gravestones over the harbour; that quiet resting place, over the unresting sea, where the brave old Guernsey ocean warriors are sleeping. The traffic of buyers and vendors in the great echoing market place came out to them like the murmur of the waves.

I think Dearlove and Reggie were sensitive

to it all, the charm and colour and quaintness and that soothing endless murmur from the soft Guernsey voices, and the wooing sea along the harbour wall.

"Tell us, Chris," urged Reggie, looking up with adoring eyes. Always when Chris could be coaxed to stories this little crippled lad would imagine himself going out to deeds of derring-do in company with his hero.

"Go on, my jovial boon-companion," added Dearlove.

The driver withdrew to the pavement edge, pretending he was not interested, the white pony drowsed in the violet saturated shadow.

"Well," began Chris, "I met Brown about daybreak, on the illimitable veldt—he was meditating there; there were four of us, and we had been riding all night.

"‘Hallo, Brown,’ said I. ‘What’s that humpy over there?’

"There was an exceedingly small farm in the distance.

"‘That,’ said Brown calmly, ‘is me cow house, sorr.’

"Now that interested us greatly, for it suggested milk—and milk to a man who has been in the saddle all night is as plenteous nectar in a lordly dish—cup, I mean—you drink nectar—

as you Reggie very well know. So said I in my most charming manner :

“ ‘ We would like to accompany you home, Mr. Brown, and have a look at your cows.’ ”

“ And said Brown, ‘ Sorr, you are kindly welcome.’ ”

“ So, we rode on to the farm, and looking out of the kitchen door at the farm, was one solitary old ancient cow. The mother of all cows—a framework of prominent bones, covered with a grey leathern hide.

“ ‘ Brown,’ said I ‘ where’s the rest of them ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Of what, sorr ? ’ says Brown.

“ ‘ Why, the cows,’ said I.

“ And Brown looked up at me sideways, and said with an engaging little smile—

“ ‘ That’s all the cows I have to me name, sorr, you can be takin’ the whole lot together.’ ”

Reggie burst into a little fit of infectious laughter, the driver cackled beneath his straw hat, pretending to tie the lash on his whip. But Dearlove only bent her thin black brows in a frown.

“ How could you take them together when they were only one ? ” she asked in a tone of exasperation. “ I don’t care ; that story, it’s too grown-upish. Besides, how do you know his name was Brown ? ”

"I guessed," returned Chris meekly. "Here come Nesta and Mamie. Good! Now I am feeling safer."

Nesta and Mamie came down the steps together. Mamie, I must tell you, was as fond of pretty clothes as Dearlove, and this morning she had on a most delightful dress of pale mauve muslin, with little flounces of lace on it, and much delicate stitchery—and an airy fichu about her slender shoulders, and a big white hat to shade the sun off her eyes. She had been painting off the rocks, and carried a light easel, paint box and canvas. If you had not known she was Dearlove's mother, you might easily have thought she was a nice, dreamy old maid, who wrote poetry and loved little children.

Nesta was gloriously bright in white silk, thin and billowy, and shining. She made Reggie think of angels; angels who clasped motherless little boys in their arms and made them forget their fears.

She came straight to his side, and kissed him on the forehead, tilting back his old straw hat to do it.

"You are not over-tired, Reggie?" she asked quickly. "Have you been walking too much?"

"No." Reggie clenched his thin hands, and

shot out his arms to show how little tired he was. "It's only Chris," he explained. "He wants us to drive home." Then he drew himself up sharply, flushing, his teeth on his under lip. He had said "*home*."

Nesta nodded. At that moment she was groaning in her soul over a new sample of Mary Bawn's fine darning in the little sleeve of Reggie's shabby coat. Mary's darning and fine drawing were little short of exquisite. But they hurt Nesta horribly. She would have given so much to possess the power of dressing this little boy with the angel face as she would have liked.

She settled the frayed black ribbon under his collar, noting jealously the fine stitchery on the white linen—Mary again. She determined inwardly to visit Mary soon, and talk to her. Why could she not have Reggie with her till the end of their stay in Guernsey? Nesta could see no possible reason why Mary Bawn should say no.

"What were you all talking about so seriously?" asked Mamie, her head on one side.

Dearlove made ready to reply, but was interrupted by a little pretty, dark-eyed, bright complexioned young woman, dressed with great neatness and refinement, who paused beside the chair, and addressed herself tearfully to Reggie.

"I beg your pardon, ladies," she remarked

apologetically, "but may I speak to this little gentleman for a moment? Master Reggie, *have* you seen my Jem this morning?"

Reggie lifted his hat with a gentle courtesy, as he answered her.

"Yes, Miss Davis," he said. "We saw him down on the rocks."

Dearlove started round, and looked at her attentively, with large serious eyes.

"So did I," she added solemnly, "and if you're the Sea-person's Miss Davis, I must tell you he's rather unhappy. Isn't he, Reggie?"

And to their embarrassment, Miss Davis suddenly burst into piteous weeping. Nesta immediately drew her into the shadow, and Mamie covered her from the public view with her sunshade.

"Oh, miss—Oh, ma'am," she sobbed. "I take it real kind of you, but my heart's broke."

"'Xactly what he said," murmured Dearlove sympathetically, getting out of the chair, and shaking her head solemnly. "'Xactly."

"Oh, Master Reggie," wept Miss Davis, "don't be telling me everybody's looking, because I don't care. I've cried all the way here, and I'll be crying all the way back. Jem's wrote me a letter—something cruel it is—and I never meant him to take it like that. I wanted him to marry

me right off—and he wouldn't. My heart's broke!"

"I'm most awfully sorry," said Dearlove quietly, "'specially as his is broke too; he's awfully hurt inside, Miss Davis, 'bout what you said about his leg—one side of his mouth smiles down, an' the other side smiles up, an' you sort of feel he's wantin' to cry. You ought to be proud of his glorious wooden leg, an' he thinks you hate it."

Miss Davis looked round the little circle of absorbed and sympathizing faces, and then at the absorbed driver in the background, and wailed softly.

"I didn't mean it," she repeated hoarsely. "I flung out at him—Master Reggie, you know I would rather have Jem with no legs, and wheel him about on a barrow for the rest of my days, than take anybody else—they drove me mad with their jokes at him."

"I know," acknowledged Reggie in great distress for her trouble. "I told him so, Miss Davis."

"God bless you," said Miss Davis fervently; "he's bound to believe *you*, Master Reggie. Will you go and see him and take him my dear love, and say I'll marry him any time. Oh, Master Reggie, you would need to go at once, for

his door's shut and he won't take no heed to me knocking."

"What is this?" asked Nesta. "Tell me Dearlove—or you, Reggie—there is something we ought to understand?"

Reggie, in a few clear sentences, told them all the little history of this lovers' quarrel, and the three deliberated for a space among themselves.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Davis," said Dearlove suddenly, preparatory to rushing over to them, "but it's a secret I have with Reggie, an' I must tell them, before they do anythin'."

There was a quick exclamation after her incursion to their midst, and then a ripple of laughter, —laughter that sounded like the crackling of thorns to poor Miss Davis' tortured ear.

Then Chris came up to her, and lifted Reggie back to the chair, waving Dearlove to her place beside him.

"Cheer up, Miss Davis," he said, with a queer smile in his grey eyes. "It will be all right. I'll go and see Jem myself immediately. Or better still, I'll send Patrick Quin; he is waiting up at the house now. Would you like Patrick to go and stay with him till our arrival?"

"Thank you, sir," returned Miss Davis with a choked sob, "I would. Mr. Quin is that intimate with him he can say what he knows is right."

"Then that will be all right," concluded Chris cheerfully, "and don't cry any more. The falling out of friends is the renewal of love—remember that."

"Good-bye, Miss Davis," cried Reggie, as the chair moved on, "we are all goin' to see him."

"An' you will be s'prised when he comes to you," added Dearlove triumphantly.

Miss Davis curtseyed miserably from the edge of the pavement, and her red-rimmed eyes encouraged those of Mamie, who was lingering behind. Nesta after a kindly word went on with the chair.

"My brother is a powerful persuader," said Mamie in her soft fashion. "Do not fret any more. Jem and you will be friends again very soon. It is so easy to misunderstand people."

But Miss Davis, to her consternation, put her little needle-pricked fingers over her face and sobbed outright, publicly and unashamed.

"Don't cry." Mamie took her by the arm, and led her into the cool shadow of the ancient church porch, pressed her gently down in the long grey granite bench, and seated herself between the weeping woman and the door.

"You will be ill," she urged gently, "and make yourself quite unfit to be seen, into the bargain. It is all right I am sure. Do not cry any more."

"Oh, lady, lady." Her face had gone a dull grey, in which the red-rimmed eyes looked pitifully terror-filled. There was terror in her pretty voice too. "What do I care how I look? It's Jem. He says he'll make away with himself rather than see me married to Smith. Father and mother they want me to marry Smith, because he's got money, and it made me so mad to hear them running Jem down, that I flung out trying to make him ask me to run away."

"And did he not?" inquired Mamie.

"He did—he did." Miss Davis was reduced from terror to a condition of the most abject repentance. "But before I could say 'knife' he was off. Off an' never give me a chance to say what was on my mind—and now he says he's that miserable he don't care to live. All me, all me!"

Mamie pondered for a while, wondering how this tangle was to be put straight.

"If he was the sort of man that would threaten I wouldn't fear," pursued Miss Davis in tremulous accents, "but he ain't, lady; he's the cheerfullest man on God's earth—an' he's that content, that he'd drive you mad to hear him. He'd be cheerful on a desert island."

Mamie took the rough little right hand in her own, and held it sympathetically.

"Miss Davis," she began in her deep, quiet voice. "I will go with my brother, and speak to your Jem myself. Perhaps I can set it all right more easily. And now I must be going, or I may miss him. But I would like to say something to you first—if you will let me. When you are Jem's happy wife, remember this. It is not all the years of love and patience that matter to a man, but the little foolish things we say when we are worried or angry or hurried. It is the stinging bitter little thoughtless words we say in the haste of emotion that a man carries about and cherishes. —All else will be forgotten—love and care, and sacrifice. So take a practice, as we say among ourselves, and ride yourself with curb and bridle and spur. Or Jem may go again—and there will be no renewal of love."

The little woman clasped her hands on her knees and swayed forward in a white heat of repentance.

"Well I know," she cried in poignant anguish, "well I know how true that is. But never again, never again. In this place I swear it, ma'am."

"Good!" encouraged Mamie softly, holding out her hand. "Good-bye—and if you ask me I will go to the wedding, Miss Davis, when it comes off."

Miss Davis stood up and watched her go past

the long arcades of the sounding market house and up the narrow street. Then with a long quivering sigh she gave a final scrub to her scarlet nose, and went back towards the married quarters.

As Mamie reached the veranda of the house on the hill she witnessed a little scene, and overheard a brief dialogue that filled her with mischievous enjoyment.

Corporal Patrick Quin came suddenly out of the dining room, carrying under his arm a long, curiously shaped case. He was looking very serious and in great haste.

As he stepped off the veranda Barbara, in her blue cotton dress and dainty muslin cap, came out of her kitchen ; and Corporal Quin immediately, and for all his haste, stepped back again, put a huge arm round her trim waist, then a hand under her dimpled chin, tipping her head back so that a pretty little red mouth was conveniently beneath his own, whereon he kissed her, with manifest and undisguised enjoyment.

"Me dear," said Corporal Quin, "the taste av' that is mate and drink to a starvin' man."

Barbara twisted herself away, and faced him with a vindictive stamp.

"Hoo daure ye, Mr. Quin ?" she demanded.

"That's exactly what I'm wishful to explain to ye, honey," was Paddy's prompt reply. "But

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I'll be comin' back. I've no time now. I'm off hot fut to Jem Hayne's."

"Please to go," urged Barbara, "an' don't be comin' here again."

"Arrah now, would ye be havin' me kape me heart so far away from me?" asked Paddy imploringly, and departed running.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAKING-UP OF FRIENDS

MAMIE found a consultation going on in the dining-room, in which Dearlove was bearing a strenuous part. Paddy had taken on the odd gift, but the other insisted that it was her prerogative to make the presentation in person. She hoped vigorously that Jem's door would still be locked, so that Paddy would have to sit upon the doorstep till her arrival. She could not see it was what Chris termed, "A man's affair. Reggie was the one." Dearlove couldn't see it, but she submitted reluctantly. Why shouldn't a lady give a present like that sort herself, and why couldn't ladies talk about legs? Legs were legs, she supposed; why was it rude to talk about them? You had to walk on your legs or you had to hop. That was really why Miss Davis was cross with poor Jem; if you couldn't keep your own legs you naturally wanted artificial

ones. Grown-ups were sort of queer an' silly. Because even if you said your legs were limbs, like Mr. Gaynor, people knew they were legs all the same.

"But, my dear, when you are grown up——" began Mamie laughingly.

Dearlove pounced upon her like a hawk.

"That's just the point of it," she cried with a swooping gesture of complete triumph. "I'm *not* grown up," she laughed delightedly, "and neither are you, or you, or you, or you," she pointed a slim forefinger at each of the dismayed quartette in turn. "The only one a little bittish grown up is Ganpa, an' he's twenty-five. Ha! Ho! Mr. Boon-Companion!"

Chris smote himself upon the chest. "Gosh!" he cried, "I'd forgotten again! Well bowled, little 'un."

As for Mamie and Nesta, they looked at each other, and at Ganpa, and laughed. Ganpa pulled his white moustache, and his eyes twinkled brightly under their fierce brows.

"If Ganpa says I'm not to tell Jem about the leg, why I'll let Reggie," she conceded. "Sit down children and eat your lunch quick, because we're all goin' out directly after."

"I think," said Ganpa, with his wrists on the

table edge, and carving fork and knife held upright, "Reggie would know just how to persuade him, Dearlove. Sea-persons are sometimes of a proud and haughty temperament, and he might——"

"I know, rather," agreed Dearlove quickly. "He might think we weren't proud of his glorious wooden leg. But Reggie can 'xplain it's only for the weddin'."

"That's it," assented Chris. "Keep up his pecker for the awful ordeal; stay him with mechanical ——"

"Chris!" reproached Nesta, her eyes drenched with laughter.

"I have ordered the barouche," said Ganpa, "and I think it will be best for us to take up Miss Davis on the way, and drop her with Dearlove and Nesta at the Sea-person's little farmhouse. We can drive on to *The Imperial*, and call for them all coming back."

So it was arranged. Reggie was to take the brunt of the business on him, and Dearlove might come in after the explanations. Dearlove listened attentively, and was very quiet for quite five minutes, then she looked up beamingly.

"I've made some poetry," she announced, looking round the table. "Would you like to hear it?"

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There was a chorus of assent, which seemed to convey immense gratification to her.

"Very well," she said, "I will tell you it :

"Oh, the joy upon the shore—

When Jem does see his loving sweetheart once more."

She broke off with an expression of acute melancholy. "I don't know why," she broke out, "but somehow it isn't sounding right, an' it was simply lovely in my own mind."

"Ah !" sighed Mamie sympathetically, "that's always the way with us, Dearlove. The thought seems fine till we look at it in cold blood."

"It's worse when you see it in cold print," added Chris consolingly. "Cheer up, Dearlove, I'll see you Poet Laureate yet."

They packed themselves into the roomy barouche and set off leisurely down the narrow street, along the quays, and up to the Citadel, where the road lay past that sunny hill, with its crown of tall pines, that are always singing, even when the wind is still, as if their boughs were stirred by airs from Faery.

At the married quarters Mamie went in, and returned with little Miss Davis. It was an idea of Ganpa's that things might be suddenly smoothed if Miss Davis put in a word for herself. She was very quiet now and singularly pale, her dark eyes

looking out from great violet tearstains, that gave her an indescribably childish air. Miss Davis had been a very naughty little lady, even in Reggie's opinion, and she was most horribly ashamed of herself, and in great fear. She sat apologetic between Nesta and Mamie, making herself as small as possible among their light airy flounces.

Dearlove and Reggie had mounted in great delight to the box seat, and Dearlove, to the little lad's astonishment, took the reins and drove with the hand of an expert, while the old servant folded his arms and looked approvingly on.

The road was running level now above the sunlit dazzle of the sea, the soft rumour of waves upon the sand came up to them in the golden air with the sweet odour of the sea.

There was a little grey church with an odd squat tower standing above the way, surrounded by a silent company of grey stones, some upright, some slanting, as if the winds that blow mightily over ocean had blown them slightly off their balance, or they were inclining to some voice from below, whispering calm and content from among the carnations and white pinks. All that little churchyard, along its grey stone wall, was covered with the sweet-smelling, fair-blooming Guernsey flowers, roses, and carnations, and stocks of every

colour, so that the greenness of the grass showed only in between the long narrow mounds. Opposite the church stood a low-browed, white-washed farmhouse with immaculately white muslin blinds on its lattice windows, and a gigantic climbing geranium on one side of the green-painted door, a pink rose of the old sweet cabbage kind trailing up the other. Miss Davis looked and shuddered. The green-painted door and the pretty quaint windows were tightly closed, and those white blinds made her sick. She closed her eyes, and opened them at the kindly touch of Mamie's slender fingers.

"Patience!" encouraged Mamie softly, "Paddy is there."

"Oh!" moaned Miss Davis, looking with very bright eyes in a grey face at the little house, "if only one window was open!"

The barouche drew up, and the children got down, full of business and quaintly important. Dearlove took Miss Davis by the hand, and waved the carriage on.

"Take care of yourselves, dears," she advised. "An' you needn't be too long."

"How do you think they'll manage?" questioned Chris of nobody in particular as they moved off.

"What is Paddy doing?" wondered Mamie,

and they looked at each other with just a shade of anxiety.

"Leave it to the children," advised Ganpa finally; "he won't get away from Dearlove."

Miss Davis lingered at the closed door, where no one replied to her timid knocking or to the more assured demand for admittance made by Dearlove in person.

When Reggie and Dearlove went round to the back porch, she remained behind, looking forlornly through the little chinks between the white blinds and the windows.

At the back, the children discovered Paddy on his knees in the porch, talking eloquently through the keyhole with considerable exasperation in his big mellow voice. Every now and again he would pause in his exhortation and vent his feelings in language not usually reserved for anything but forcibility. In one of those interims he found Dearlove regarding him with a sort of subdued joyfulness, and Reggie by her, his features drawn together between pain and laughter.

He scrambled to his feet, and apologised for his last remark, cap in hand.

"What's come over him I don't know," he concluded; "he's got the divil's own stiffness to his backbone, beggin' pardon, miss, that he takes no soort av' notice av' me at all, at all. Here I

am discoursin' through the keyhole till me throat is as dry as—as the barren rocks av' Aden, that the song's about, an' niver a yelp out av' him in it all ! ”

“ Is he in, Paddy ? ” queried Reggie nervously, his eyes travelling all over the whitewashed walls.

“ Oh, he's in right enough,” grumbled Paddy indignantly.

“ How do you know ? ” inquired Dearlove.

“ Becas, miss, he come home an' tould his ould housekeeper to go see her niece, an' to be in no haste to git back, an' that same's not natural to a man that likes his three males a day, whin he hasn't tasted food or drink the night before.” He shook his head aggressively, as if Jem Haynes was doing him some personal injury by his perverse proceedings in refusing food and drink, being accustomed to them. “ A man likes his males,” he repeated, “ onless he's tuk bad—an'——”

“ Paddy,” said Reggie quietly, pulling at his friend's coat.

Corporal Quin turned swiftly. “ Yis, sorr,” he answered.

“ Do you see that window,” Reggie pointed to the window by the door. “ it's open a little at the top. Pull it down and lift me so that I can speak to him, if he's there.”

Paddy slapped his legs with an exclamation of thankfulness, "Right you are, Master Reggie!"

He pulled down the window noiselessly, and lifted the little lad up so that he could support himself by his arms on the top of the window frame.

Reggie looked in, and saw a quaint old-fashioned kitchen such as one sees nowadays only in pictures, or in Guernsey. A delightful kitchen, with a red-tiled floor, and a huge black oak dresser filled with old blue and pink iridescent china, with pewter jugs and mugs hanging along it, and great china bowls propped up above the snowy wooden basins and platters.

Down by the cavernous fireplace ran a long table, and sitting at the table with his head on his arms, was Jem, before the heaped up white ashes of the dead fire. Poor Jem, he had battled down the pain of his loss, but had succumbed to the humiliation. He was, as Miss Davis had said, a slow cheerful nature, the sort that thinks no evil, and finds it not only difficult of comprehension, but almost impossible of belief. The shock of his sweetheart's cruel words, her unfaith with him, after so many years, had dragged him to great depths of suffering and humiliation, and he was suffering most in the thought that

he was, after all these years of worship, ashamed of her.

Reggie tapped imperatively at the window, but he remained in the same attitude, motionless. Another might have thought him asleep, but Reggie knew in his heart, somehow, that Jem was not asleep, only suffering, blind for the time, and deaf. The fear he had since he listened to Miss Davis died down in him. He felt the worst was over. His thin mouth curved passionately downwards as he tapped again, and called, "Jem! Jem! I want to come in."

The voice penetrated in its shrill piercing sweetness past the surging noise that filled the man's brain. Paddy he had not heard at all, but Reggie's thin clear pipe would not be denied.

"Jem, let me in! Let me in!"

He lifted his head off his arms, and gazed stupidly up at the window.

"Let me in, please," insisted Reggie.

Jem Haynes rose and stumped unsteadily across the floor at the sound. Paddy took one swift glance into Reggie's face as he lifted him down to earth, and setting him in the porch, went silently and quickly out of sight. "The childer would do better than anybody."

Jem fumbled blindly with all the bolts before the door was at length flung open, and the sailor

man looked down on his little visitors with uncomprehending eyes set in a drawn and aged face.

His head was ringing curiously, and the queer surging noise continued in his ears. He felt sick and giddy as he held the door.

The children were standing together on the threshold, supporting the case between them.

"I am glad," said Dearlove complacently, "you have opened the door at last. Reggie and me 's brought you a sort of a—a present."

"It's rather heavy," remarked Reggie suggestively.

Jem blinked at him stupidly. There was a queer translucence about the pair of them. He wondered through the surging in his head, if he might not be dreaming. They stood in the golden afternoon sun, looking in on him, like a couple of visitants from some other world. Dearlove had attired herself gorgeously, as she loved to do; there never was a daughter of Eve born, who loved pretty things so much as this little girl. She had put on a dress of shining rose-coloured silk, very thin and loose, and over it her hair wandered in a maze of brilliant red-brown light, fine as silk, and burnished in each single thread, till it was fairly dazzling to look at; and from the midst of it peeped a little wild-rose face, with changeful expectant eyes. As for Reggie, Jem Haynes had

always had his own opinion of him. There could be no possible mistake in thinking he belonged to the angels. And how frail he looked! How transparently brave and uncomplaining—a voice cried out amid the tumult in Jem's brain, and he was suddenly filled with shame.

"Come in, Master Reggie," he said haltingly, like one who had some difficulty in finding words to express himself. "An' the little lady—I'll take that."

He carried the case to the table, and pulled out two straight-backed chairs.

"Sit ee down," he said invitingly, steadying himself with his finger tips on the table.

"Oh, thank you," hastened Dearlove, her longing eyes on a three-legged stool by the fire. She would have delighted in that stool, but politeness drove her forth again. "I should love to sit down," she went on, "but I'm to let Reggie 'xplain about the—the—present to you," and she nodded mysteriously up at him.

She turned reluctantly. "Don't be long," she admonished Reggie. "I simply can't wait long." And so protesting she danced out again into the sun.

Then she ran back on a sudden thought.

"She hates waitin' too," she remarked.

"Who, miss?" asked Jem vacantly.

"I'll tell you when you've got it on," cried Dearlove, tearing herself away again, and tried to relieve her pent-up feelings by whirling round and round on her toes in the little clean-swept space around the back door.

To her came now and then little shrill gusts of Reggie's eloquence, with gruff questions thrust in by Jem's big bass.

"No!" came at length. "Give you my word of honour, it was all by herself she thought of it. Ellen doesn't know. I can tell you straight, because I was with her when she got it."

In the lull that followed this declaration Dearlove really enjoyed herself in the discovery she could spin like a teetotum on one small toe, if she guided herself carefully with the other. When Reggie came to call her into the kitchen, he could make out nothing but a maze of flying glittering brown, and circling lines of fluffy white and rose-red. She sat down suddenly and stared at him.

"Dearlove!" he called, "do come quick. You never saw anything so good."

"I'll come," promised Dearlove, "soon's the ground is flat again."

When it was sufficiently level, she got up and went sedately in. Jem was sitting by the table with the new limb stretched out before him, an

entirely new look on his sunburnt face and in his brown eyes. He stood up and saluted her.

"Well!" she whispered ecstatically, her hands clasped under her chin. "That is real! Mr. Jem, you simply couldn't tell:—it's most lovely."

"Couldn't be better if I was Lord Nelson, miss," declared Jem dully, but with a twinkle. "What dangs me, is how you knew it was my birthday."

Dearlove took a quick breath, and glanced in consternation at Reggie. But no help was there.

"I—I rather think if you fall out with anybody it's pitularly nice to make up friends on a birthday," she considered slowly; "it's simply hateful to be not speakin' when you've got somethin' you're dyin' to show them—specially if it's somebody you most awfully love."

"Yes, miss," agreed Jem dismally, "that's so."

She came a step nearer, and looked up at him with the mischief dancing in her big eyes. Jem, looking down into them, was reminded of the sea in tropical parts, where the sunlight lurks under the wave like a living thing.

"I say!" she whispered, with a hasty look round, "she *will* be su'prised—I'm goin' for her now."

Jem swallowed once or twice to put down the lump in his throat, but before he could speak she was gone.

"Jem," admonished Reggie faintly, "don't forget she's been cryin' an awful lot."

Jem groaned and gazed down on the fingers of his right hand, on the table.

"What she wanted, you know," went on Reggie courageously, "was for you to carry her right off, so that her old father and mother wouldn't be able to make her take Smith. They rather bullied her, you know that, Jem—so—so——"

He stopped. Jem was swearing to himself, softly and steadily under his breath.

There was a pause after that, and the sea-wind filled the old kitchen up with all the sweet flower scents from God's Acre across the way. Dearlove came tip-toeing in, bringing Miss Davis by the hand.

She came up to Jem, hanging her head, her silky black hair ruffled a little by the wind, her lashes quivering on a damp and pallid cheek. Jem's face twitched horribly as he looked at her, and he spoke hoarsely.

"You're sure, Ellen," he said thickly, "you're not throwin' yourself away—Dot an' carry one—an' the whole garrison laughin' at you——"

Miss Davis trembled where she stood, but never raised the downcast eyes.

"A cripple ye know, Ellen," he went on, "half a man, an' none so rich at that."

And still Miss Davis stood, clinging to Dear-love's hand, shaking like a leaf, and her eyes cast resolutely down.

"Are ye sure ye know ye're min'?" asked Jem sternly; "ye won't be leavin' me the go-by on the way to church?"

Miss Davis slowly raised her wet eyelids, and looked at him with a little sobbing indraw of her breath, two big drops hanging on her lashes. Looked at him saying no word—just a look—then Jem opened his arms wide, and she fell into them with a burst of slow terrible sobbing.

"Oh, Jem!" she cried wildly, "my own Jem!"

Jem drew the little figure to him, and laid his cheek on her silky black hair, rocking her to and fro, as if she were a little child.

"Hush!" he said softly and brokenly, "me own lill girl!"

There was no one in the wide clean old kitchen now, only themselves, and the sweet wind off the low green graves across the way.

"Hush!" whispered Jem, "God's love! my lill girl, hush!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO TEA

WHEN the carriage returned from *The Imperial*, its occupants beheld two small patient figures sitting on each of the great round granite boulders that flanked Jem Haynes' front gate. There was no sign of Miss Davis, or even of Jem himself, from which Ganpa argued that all was well, though Mamie and Nesta were nervous.

Chris reserved his opinion till he was sure, but thought the absence of the oblong case promising.

He sprang out as they came to a standstill, and lifted Reggie in beside Ganpa, handed Dearlove to her place, and banged the door cheerfully.

"Well, my jolly boon-companions," he said inquiringly. "How went the plan? Is all serene?"

He regarded them suspiciously as he spoke. There was an unusual severity about Dearlove and a mistiness in Reggie's eyes that mystified

him. Why, they looked as if they might have been weeping on their separate stones.

"I rather think," began Dearlove, with a decided sniff and a subdued manner, "they are quite friends; she's sittin' on his knee, cryin' like anything."

"Losh!" exclaimed Chris despairingly, "is the woman an irrigation plant. I never knew anything like her for weeps; Reggie, does she always behave like that 'ask me no more, for at a touch I weep!' May the poet pardon me!"

"No, indeed, Chris," denied Reggie in haste. "I never knew her to cry at all till yesterday."

"She is only cryin' for joy now," explained Dearlove clearly. "Reggie an' me cried for joy too when we sat at the gate. You sort of can't help cryin' when you're most awful glad about anythin'."

"But is it all right now?" asked Mamie

"Have they completely made it up?" questioned Nesta eagerly.

"And as to the new leg?" inquired Ganpa.

"He's got it on," said Reggie shyly, "but he made her say she'd take him with the other. Not exactly say, but——"

"It was then she cried," went on Dearlove, taking up the narrative; "she was so frightfully happy. An' it 'minded me of the time when

Mamie went away for six weeks, an' I never saw her—an' when she came back I was fieldin'—an' I just *howled*—an' Mamie an' me sat under the maple tree at the Convent, an' we hugged each other, an' we did cry—we were so happy."

Her voice assumed a tone of lamentable melancholy, and the tears rushed over her long lashes at the recollection.

"Such a nice agreeable way of being happy," submitted Chris, without a tinge of irony in his voice; "useful sort of thing in South Africa, for instance, where they hardly ever have enough rain."

"Never mind," retorted Dearlove quickly. "I've seen you pipe your eye—the day you snuffed the whisky up your nose you simply *wept*."

"I was trying to cure a cold," explained Chris to Reggie, "and an enemy advised me to put a little whisky in the palm of my hand and snuff it up. He said it would cure my cold, Reggie—it nearly cured me—it was the most powerful brand of cure I ever encountered. As to my family, I can only say their conduct was disgraceful; they allowed me to wrestle with the spirit entirely unaided and alone; Dearlove, I remember, lay down upon the floor in convulsions."

"I couldn't help it," protested Dearlove faintly. "You would keep on sayin': 'if—if—if!'—an'

the tears poured. You have got a lot of tears in you, Chris."

"Not now," amended Chris reproachfully. "I exhausted the supply that time."

"But did it cure your cold?" questioned Reggie eagerly.

"It did," replied Chris decidedly; "but it is a drastic method, Reggie. I do not recommend it."

Mamie laughed softly, Nesta smiled, and Ganpa nodded gravely.

"I must tell you, Dearlove," he announced diffidently, "that we met friends at *The Imperial*; they have gone on by the lower road; they are going to have tea with us. I want you to be very nice to them."

"Oh!"—Dearlove looked blankly from one to the other—"Grown-ups. What kind of grown-ups?"

"One of them," Chris submitted gravely, "is a pal of mine—cavalryman—tough—very quiet—can't think properly unless he's on a horse. Animals are very fond of him; even the motor cars follow him. The other is a pal of Ganpa's—a Judge, Dearlove—very dry and hard; mind your P's and Q's with him, or he'll send you to quod like winking. And the third is a pal of Ganpa's pal; he's a German Professor and very learned; he is writing a book about England

and the English, so mind your P's and Q's with him too."

"A German Professor!" lamented Dearlove piteously. "Oh, this is *not* playin' the game at all! Couldn't you have 'xplained to them we are havin' a 'Make-Believe,' an' we don't want any grown-ups in it."

Ganpa shook his head and smiled. Nesta and Mamie laughed outright.

"They collared us," complained Chris gloomily. "No go, Dearlove; luckily, they are leaving for St. Malo to-morrow."

"Oh, well," conceded Dearlove, a little comforted, "p'haps I can stand them to tea, but I think I'll have to drop the 'Make-Believe' till they're gone; you simply couldn't pretend to be cousins with a German Professor an' a dry, hard Judge."

"Better have 'em dry and hard than soft and spongy," advised Chris. "And Kerr isn't such a bad chap. Stay yourself with Kerr; he'll carry you through."

Arrived at the steps, Chris carried Reggie up to the veranda, where tea was laid, and the three guests were sitting in expectation of their arrival.

Nesta and Mamie welcomed them, and Dearlove shook hands systematically with each one, say-

ing "how de do's" with a surprising confidence and social ease. Reggie from his cushions watched her in amazement. Dearlove had on her best polish in thank-offering for the fact that the visitors couldn't stay long.

The Judge peered at her from over his spectacles. She thought him rather like an ancient mummy—very old, very shrivelled, and dry. Dearlove wondered if he might not fall into dust if anything collided with him suddenly. General Kerr was very long, very lean and very brown, and had the thinnest face and the longest eyes she had ever seen. But silent as he was, his lips were kind and humorous, and the long eyes lit up when he looked at people. They lit up considerably when he looked at Mamie. He took his cup from her hand, and came to sit beside Reggie's chair, for the which Dearlove instantly liked him.

The German Professor, seeing this, came too and sat by Reggie; he was a small, round-faced Professor, with mild blue eyes and an infantile manner. He inspired Dearlove with a tolerant contempt. He had on a cloak like a cassock, in spite of the heat of the blue day, and a little round felt hat on his long blonde hair. Reggie thought he was like a big boy, dressed up; even his spectacles failed to inspire veneration.

"Nice place, Guernsey," volunteered General Kerr.

"I haf not seen anyver so mooch pretty a blace," confirmed the Professor.

"I think it's an awfully lovely place," considered Dearlove without enthusiasm, "but the times are frightfully long in it."

"The times?" repeated General Kerr.

"Times—what is times?" questioned the Professor mildly, opening his pale eyes.

"Oh, *times*, you know," explained Dearlove, with kindly patience; "breakfast time to lunch time, an' lunch time to tea time. Sometimes I think it will never be tea time again; it's so slow."

"Oh," commented General Kerr, with a side-long glance at Reggie that established an immediate intimacy between them. "I see; I used to remark the same thing in South Africa, but the times there used to be too long—sometimes twenty-four hours between."

"It's just as much here—plenty times," insisted Dearlove.

"O-h-h," doubted Reggie.

"You have then but one meal in the day, is it?" asked the Professor with interest.

But Dearlove did not hear him; she was intent on something else.

"Did you meet a man called Brown in South

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Africa ? ” she inquired eagerly, addressing herself to General Kerr.

His brown eyes danced, and he pulled his scrubby moustache to hide the smile on his lips, but before he could reply, Mamie had beckoned Dearlove and given her a plate of dainty little Maddaline cakes. She came and offered them to the Professor, who set down his cup on the floor of the veranda, where it came into contact immediately afterwards with the toe of his thick boot.

He literally sprang off the ground. “Haf I etwas gebrochen ? ” he asked agitatedly. “It is anything gone-smash ? ” The Professor prided himself on his knowledge of colloquial English.

“ ‘Course not,” Dearlove hastened to assure him ; “ anyway, it’s quite common china.”

“ Oh ! ” ejaculated the Professor, helping himself to one of the little cakes she offered, with an expression of profound gloom. “ Speak not to me of china ! ”

“ I’m sorry,” deplored Dearlove, watching him with speculative eyes, “ though of course I don’t know why ; but if you’d like it better, I’ll say delf.”

“ It is all one—the self-same,” gloomed the Professor.

“ *But why ?* ” said Dearlove, wide-eyed and

eager. She put down the plate by General Kerr, and prepared to investigate.

The Professor was evidently quite willing to enlighten her.

"It is last night," he began dolefully. "I am at the house of a lady—here in this blace—in her drawing-room; it is mooch china—some on the wall—some in the cabenets—when I joomp it all fall down—is smash-oop, kaput-gemacht! so."

"But why did you jump?" demanded Dearlove blankly. The spectacle of a little plump German Professor jumping in a drawing-room among the china, presented itself to her mental vision as a mystery.

General Kerr turned his head aside, and winked furiously at Reggie all the time this conversation was going on, which so embarrassed poor Reggie—who was himself profoundly interested in it—that he made signals of distress to Chris, and brought him over to the end of the veranda where they sat.

"Why—what?" asked the Professor, dejectedly.

"Why did you jump in the drawing-room?" insisted Dearlove, undismayed.

"I joomp for joy, because I was so ver' happee," explained the Professor.

General Kerr hung over his chair back, so that

Reggie feared—seeing him so long and so lean—that he would break in two halves, and Chris would have some trouble to put him together again.

“ Oh ! ” commented Chris ; “ you see there are other ways of expressing happiness, young lady.”

“ Yes,” agreed Dearlove confusedly. There was a momentary haze in her active brain. “ I—I didn’t think professors jumped—in drawin’-rooms an’ places like that sort.”

“ But why shall I not joomp, if I am happy ? ” The Professor’s aspect was that of exceeding injury. “ Eet ees right to be happy.”

He examined her more carefully through his spectacles. There was a something unusual about her appearance. He had not noticed that very young English maidens possessed such radiancy ; she had an expression of brightness quite to be remarked upon. Dearlove’s face was the mirror of a thousand emotions while he looked.

“ What ees your name ? ” he asked meekly.

“ Well, of course,” she informed him, “ it depends on where I am. When I’m in the world, my name is Dearlove ; it’s a sort of pretendy name, you know ; my real name is Philomena ; at least, it is the first of my names. I’ve got an awful lot.”

“ Pheelomeena,” repeated the Professor slowly. “ She was a Roman.”

"I know," Dearlove nodded darkly; "that's just the point of it; she had a vocation; she actually covered up her face for fear people would love her. I wonder why good people—saints an' martyrs—are so slack; if she hadn't been so good people would have cheered her on when she went to the lions. You couldn't be good enough for a name like that—'specially if you like *everything*'—Chris thinks so too."

"Who ees Chris?" The Professor was congratulating himself on material for his book.

"Chris is my uncle," said Dearlove with great simplicity, little thinking what a bomb she was throwing into the Professor's book.

"Oh!" said the Professor. "Your oncle."

She nodded, her mouth full of cake. "Mamie thinks p'haps I'll be more like it when I'm grown up," she continued after an interval; "but I don't think so, because I do like enjoyin' myself."

"And who, now, ees Mamie?" inquired the Professor, with an engaging little air of boyish candour.

"Mamie," said Dearlove. "Oh, Mamie's my mother; that's her over there talkin' to the Judge. I'm awful glad I'm not a judge! Isn't Mamie a ducksome dear?"

The Professor put his head on one side, and murmured behind his glittering spectacles.

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“Doocksoome ! Vat is dat ? Doocksoome ? ”

But before Dearlove could explain General Kerr was taken with such a terrible attack of subdued coughing, that her whole attention was immediately transferred to him.

“Chris,” she cried imploringly, “clap him on the back. Oh, *please*, clap him on the back ! ”

And while Chris hammered his friend and companion-in-arms on the back, imperturbably grave himself the while, the Professor thought on what a great fund of material he had hit upon in this afternoon tea with the nobly-born family Amherst. For instance, that it is the custom among the highest nobility for the children to address their parents by name—a most singular custom—but with its charm.

“And thank Heaven ! ” exclaimed Chris, when she was in bed. “Dearlove did not tackle Sir Algernon.”

“She may have the opportunity—and I rather fear it,” interjected Ganpa. “I have asked him and Kerr to dine with us to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XVIII

GANPA'S DINNER-PARTY

"I DO not know, Amherst," said Sir Algernon, "if you still take an interest in entomology." He had a detached and impersonal method of speech, and an eye that looked forth into space, saying mutely, "I have no personal interest in this matter, but it is so-and-so." The Junior Bar had nick-named him Rhadamanthus, because of his impartiality. He curved his withered fingers round the stem of his wine-glass and waited judicially for Ganpa's reply.

"Well," confessed Ganpa, "perhaps not so much as I did, Fitzwygram. I find humanity far more absorbing."

Sir Algernon took very little interest in the fact. He saw so much of humanity himself, that it merely bored him. That was because the Judge had only his great fame for wife and child. So his heart had overgrown with callosities.

"Ah," he said in the same abstract tone, "I have had great luck lately. I have acquired a

specimen of the squeaking sphinx, a very rare moth—better known as *Cressonia Juglandis*. Pale blue with a curving spine. A friend of Professor Hochiemer sent it to me. He captured the caterpillar in Missouri, and was surprised to hear it squeal like a young mouse. A most decided squeal. I have pinched it purposely several times."

"Our family tyrant," commented Chris, "was calling out lately for a flower that could bark. A moth that squeaks would interest her greatly."

"Ah," said the Judge looking round the table with his impersonal and disinterested gaze. "She is not present. You are wise in keeping her back; children are too much in evidence these days."

"As to that," defended Ganpa stoutly, "I am not of your opinion. Children keep the heart young. Besides, Fitzwygram, I am not so ancient myself—I happen, by your leave, to be only twenty-five. The rest of us are eleven. All, Chris included."

"But," inquired General Kerr stretching his long neck to look across at Mamie, "Why is the little lady not here?"

"She said she would come," returned Mamie with a dimpling at the corners of her mouth, "if the ices were pink. As you see the ices are not

pink. Barbara ran out of colouring matter. That is why she is not here."

"She has asked the dog from next door to tea with her," added Nesta, "and I believe she is trying to reconcile his nature to a kindly toleration of cats. Good gracious! Chris, what can have happened."

There was a noise down the passage as if Atalanta was running a race against time, with the golden apple in her hand. The door was flung wildly open and in rushed Dearlove, in a very curt scarlet smock, her face very white, her eyes very big, and herself breathless.

She stopped in the middle of the gaily lighted room, and wrung her hands.

"Ganpa!" she cried, "Mamie, Nesta. Oh Chris! The next-door's dog is runnin' after my darlin' Ups-a-Daisy to eat her." The Professor sat with his mouth slightly open, and prepared to treasure up each smallest word. This was evidently more copy for his book.

"Great Scott!" cried Chris, jumping out of his chair. "We must see to that. Where?"

"I think," wailed Dearlove, addressing herself to the guests collectively, "if you only knew how un'liable the next-door's dog is, you would 'xcuse us."

Ganpa rose and flung down his napkin. "What

did I tell you, Fitzwygram," he said with a twinkling eye. "All eleven, save myself—and I am twenty-five."

Judge Fitzwygram glanced round. With one accord they had all risen and streamed out after Dearlove. He was the only one remaining at the festive board.

"My dear Amherst," he said grimly, "you are sixty-five, if you are a day—and nothing can do away with the fact."

"Come," invited Ganpa over his shoulder as he went, "and see me make hay of your fact."

The Judge shrugged his shoulders wearily, and sat reflecting in solitary grandeur while Paddy Quin, who had been pressed into service by Barbara, placed the great old silver dishes on the table, laden with peaches and grapes and nectarines. He looked up at Paddy sharply, once or twice, as if he were about to speak, but then, with another shrug, he rose and walked reluctantly out on the veranda.

There was a full moon suspended in the sky—a moon of pale silver in a sky of deepest purple that faded away on the sea line, to faint blue-grey, and the sea lay purple underneath, rippled with iridescent lines of golden light.

"It is extraordinarily fine weather," thought

the Judge. "I wonder if the moon affects this family?"

And at that moment there flashed past him in the moonlight a small black shadow, and immediate on its heels, Death, the white hound, red-eyed, with bared teeth gleaming, the body stretched to its fullest tension. The end of that hunted thing was full in view.

And quick on their shadows came a flying glimmer of scarlet and dusky gold, and white: a small eager child angel in swift pursuit of the pursuer.

With a quick jerk the Judge was off the veranda and away after her. His shoulders set back and his elbows to his sides—he was miraculously abreast of Dearlove in an instant.

The kitten shot round the lawn, under the myrtle bushes, along the top of the wall, down the steps and across the road to a timber yard, where it began to frantically scale a pile of logs. Dearlove and the Judge ran neck and neck. After them came Chris and General Kerr. Ganpa stumbled over Nesta's train, let unwittingly down in crossing the road, and Mamie, though all her sympathies were with the kitten, sat helplessly down on the last of the garden steps and watched the chase, too overcome with laughter to go on.

It was an unusual spectacle the moon looked down upon ; a Peer of the Realm, a celebrated Judge of the Supreme Court, and two distinguished soldier men, headed by a small girl, in pursuit of a fox-terrier who was hunting a kitten.

And the most eager in the chase, the most vociferous and agile, was the Supreme Court Judge, whose fame as a misogynist and hater of cats was all over the land. Chris and the General spluttered and giggled as they ran, like two schoolboys. There was a lot they would have liked to say to each other—but the pace was too hot. They had no breath for remarks.

The kitten flew up to the very top of the pile of logs, with the dog raving like the heathen at her tail. But on the summit was a crooked branch that had been spared by the axe, shooting sideways into space, and along it the kitten ran, and stood with her tail like a chimney-sweep's brush, making breathless use of most amazing language.

Sir Algernon got past Dearlove, who had slipped at the top log but one, reached out and clasped the kitten to him, while Chris and General Kerr laid violent hands on the dog, who being a wise dog, and seeing the game was up, submitted gracefully to be led away.

"She's a Persian !" screamed Dearlove wildly.
"She's a Persian in her tail ! oh, look at her tail !"

"Eh?" panted Sir Algernon. He had subsided on the topmost log, and was beginning to wonder if it was not all hallucination. Cats too! and he positively hated cats. Yet he made no attempt to transfer the black kitten to its owner, perhaps because it had crept inside his dress coat, and was peering forth from that haven, in search of possible canine monsters.

"Her tail—" jerked out Dearlove enthusiastically, "is *quite*, quite Persian."

Ganpa arrived at the top, as she picked herself up, and sat down beside the Judge.

His eyes were twinkling wickedly in the moonlight, and his white moustaches bristled with pleasure as he regarded his old schoolfellow.

"If you please," remarked Dearlove. "I would like my Ups-a-Daisy."

If such a thing had been possible Ganpa would have sworn Sir Algernon blushed.

"Certainly," he said, "certainly," and Dearlove took Ups-a-Daisy. "*Absurd* name for a cat."

"It's a very nice name," defended Dearlove hotly. "You wouldn't like to be called Rags or Bones, or Fluffy or Puff, or things like that sort, would you? Well, cats don't either. They like nice names."

"Oh," commented the Judge, with a new and

unaccustomed meekness. "Good thing to know—I rather thought——" But what he thought she never knew, for he suddenly became conscious that Ganpa was laughing at him.

"You're a nice chap," scoffed Ganpa. "Jeers at my five-and-twenty years, Dearlove, and 'pon my word, if he didn't make me think I was fifteen, and we were at hare and hounds again."

And he turned on the logs and smote the Judge between the shoulders with a breathless peal of laughter. "Gad!" he continued enviously. "I don't believe you've turned a hair, Fitzwygram—and the pace was hot enough to break one's heart." And then another miraculous thing occurred—Dearlove never forgot it. Sir Algernon suddenly was transformed from the likeness of a brown leathern-faced grim old man to a keen-eyed, eager-faced boy, who smote Ganpa as Ganpa had smitten him, and laughed as boys laugh when they are triumphant. And that is the gladdest sound in the world, save one, and that one is when a girl laughs at the coming of her lover.

"By Jove! Amherst," said Sir Algernon confidentially. "I believe you're right. We're as young as ever we were."

They scanned each other for a moment in the moonlight, smilingly—then Ganpa looked at Dearlove. "Mark this," he said, "and never

forget it, Dearlove—the heart of a man is always young, only it sleeps at times till something wakes it up.”

“What woked it up to-night?” inquired Dearlove, regardless of grammar.

The Judge put out a thin brown hand, and drew her nearer to his side. “Youth,” he whispered, “came and touched me.”

“I’m rather glad,” responded Dearlove happily, hugging her kitten under her chin. “I like you much better.”

“Amherst,” said Sir Algernon, turning to him, “do you remember the day we ran Harrow?”

“Don’t I?” returned Ganpa quickly. “I should think so. *Rather.*”

They got down off the logs together, and walked away arm in arm. You would really have thought they were boys, and you could have heard the laughs and jokes they made all the way down at the triangle where they once burnt the witches.

Dearlove got down too, and was assisted off the last log by Chris and the General.

“Hallo,” greeted the General. “How’s the cat? A really noble sprinter she is. I’ll put my money on her any time.”

“I think——” Dearlove was rather puzzled whether to reply as to the cat, or to inquire con-

cerning the sprinting, and hesitated in consequence, clinging on to Chris with one hand and hugging the kitten under her chin with the other.

"I think," she concluded, "she's rather upset in her nerves, but she's quite well, thank you, other ways. Oh, Chris, did you see her tail?"

"The difficulty," returned Chris, "was not to see it; its truly noble proportions obscured the view. What a mercy the sweep did not spot her."

"Why?" puzzled Dearlove, with knitted brows.

"He would have commandeered her for his chimneys. Direct Ups-a-Daisy's attention to the chimney requiring to be swept, and turn on your next-door's dog."

"Poof," observed Dearlove contemptuously. Then an idea struck her, and she mused on it for a while. "I wonder," she reflected with grave eyes, "what sorts of swears cats have?"

"Dog my cats! of course," proffered Chris immediately, "or Great Snakes!"

"Snakes!" protested Dearlove, turning to the General.

"Why not?" They had arrived at the garden steps, where Nesta and Mamie were sitting in an exhausted condition, their chiffons cloudy and indistinct about them. They were so fair

and beautiful in the moonlight that they looked like spirits.

"Mamie," cried Dearlove indignantly. "Do you think Ups-a-Daisy says 'Snakes!' when she's angry?" Then before Mamie could answer, she tried it slowly and softly.

"S-N-A-K-E-S! I don't believe it."

"You should say it quickly, like this," said Chris. "S-S-S-S- Snakes, you see, S-S-S-. Plain as the nose on your face. Wash it. With water you know."

"Eh?" asked Dearlove suddenly alert. "What's that? You can't wash snakes with water, or cats either. They die."

"Oh, that's quite another story," explained Nesta laughingly.

"Tell it 'mmediately," commanded Dearlove.

"Let us go up and have coffee first," begged Nesta. "Poor Andrew Kerr! He won't ever dine with us again."

"Oh, but I *will*. Twenty times if you ask me," protested the General quickly. "But please do explain to me how you all come to be on such intimate terms with each other. It is not usual, is it?"

"Not very," conceded Dearlove. "But we're having a Make-Believe. That's why. We're all pretendin' to be the same age. Eleven you know,

like me. All but Ganpa, an' he's twenty-five. That's why I was so mad because you came. We do enjoy ourselves so."

"W-H-E-W!" whistled the General, stalking up the steps beside her with his hands behind him. "That's no end of a game. Will you—I wonder now?"

And he stopped and gazed across the lawn at Mamie, very faint and shadowy in the soft moonlight.

Then he sighed and shook his head at Dearlove.

"I'm afraid," he said confidentially, with a melancholy smile, "it's no go."

And she was too polite to inquire what he meant.

And all this time the Professor was sitting on the lawn, with his note-book glued to his spectacles, scribbling furiously notes and comments on the High Nobility of England.

CHAPTER XIX

ON A PROPER DEPORTMENT TOWARDS SPECTRES

"GANPA," cried Dearlove, "Chris is goin' to be 'bliged to tell a story. Do have your coffee down here."

"Pray will you allow me to come also?" inquired the Judge, his little face all wrinkled up in a novel desire to accommodate himself to his society.

He jumped off his chair, and followed Ganpa down on the lawn, as if he had been doing that sort of thing for years and years. How's the little cat?" he asked amiably.

"Her heart's going much better," Dearlove informed him politely. "If you put your hand here you can tell. It went sort of fluttery like before."

The Judge solemnly placed his hand over the region of the kitten's heart, and solemnly pronounced it excellent: a heart that would carry it through any amount of dog hunts.

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Dearlove was immensely gratified ; the Judge rather diffident.

"What is the story to be about ?" he questioned, wondering in his mind that he had never noticed how pleasant a thing it is to converse with young ladies of eleven. Really it was much easier to get on with them than with their elders.

"Oh, I don't know about that," regretted Dearlove. "Sometimes you can 'magine what the story is goin' to be, but mostly you can't. Because, you see, Chris has a sort of wriggley mind : an' what you didn't 'xpect happens."

"I see, I see," sympathized Sir Algernon. "I have had to deal with that kind of mind often—often. It is disconcerting—very." The Judge was still presenting such an extraordinarily boyish appearance that Dearlove remained by him, fascinated, when he sat down by Ganpa on the lawn. There ought to have been a heavy dew, with the violet sky and warmth, but there was not. It was, as Chris said, as dry as Sahara. A tropical night that had wandered by mistake to the little old island of enchantments in the grey Channel.

"Chris," commanded Dearlove, when the party were at length done with coffee, "begin the story."

"Eh—what? What?" demanded Chris.
"What story?"

"The story about wash it with water—you know." Dearlove had a knack of picking up odd phrases that exceedingly disconcerted her family at times.

"Chris, do tell it," urged Mamie with an irrepressible little laugh in her voice. "It is one of my pet stories, Dearlove, because it happened when I was there."

"It was after we were married, Nesta and I," began Chris reminiscently, "about two months after. Ganpa was at the bottom of it. He lent us Carrick-Cno, which is, as you may have heard, my beloved boon-companion, a haunted castle in the wild west of the Emerald Isle—commonly referred to as Ireland. Nesta and I enjoyed the ghosts. There were lavins an' lashins of ghosts; you couldn't walk across the room without breaking your shins over them. We enjoyed them for precisely two months all by our own lone. By the end of that time we felt it would be selfish to keep them all to ourselves, so what did we do but invite some people to our honeymoon, and they came. First of all Nesta's brother Alan. He is a friend of yours, Dearlove, and known to all this company here assembled. He is Professor of Greek Literature at Oxford, or

somewhere, and you would think to hear him that he had been candid friend to the Creator. No disparagement to Nesta, remember; she can't help her brother being like that. He said the minute he set foot among us that he had no belief in ghosts. He said other things, not fit for the chaste ear of my present audience. I blushingly refrain from repeating them."

"Professor Hochiemer," compassionated Ganpa, "I hope you grasp the drift of my son's conversation. Have another cup of coffee?"

"I do like it ver' mooch," said the Professor distractedly. "Please—I beg—do not detain your son from on-going."

Chris, who had deferentially paused in the narrative, directed a wide open look upon his wife, and went on.

"Likewise we had a certain Colonel—er—Somebody. I forget his name."

"His name, I know pe'feccly well," interrupted Dearlove, "was General Kerr—because he is wrigglin' like anythin', an' his face is red."

"Yes," acknowledged the General. "With joy I confess it!"

"And we had a dear little middy—a friend of Mamie's—and we had Mamie and Ganpa. The riot among the ghosts on their arrival was simply tremendous—the whole house reeked with

spooks—you couldn't turn round without falling over one. And now comes in the sad thing about all this. Not one of us knew how to behave to them.

"We never realized that properly till one night Mickey—Mickey was our factotum—came up from the cellars with a broken bottle in each hand, his eyes like saucers, his face an artistic tint of grey-green, and an adornment of straws and cobwebs in his warm hair. Mamie said his hair was warm, so I am justified, Dearlove, in repeating that description; do not look so surprised. Mickey was very reserved, and most inarticulate. He sat down in a window seat in the dining room, and conveyed to us with extreme difficulty the fact that 'Thim Wans were at it agin'. Then he wept on my bosom, and explained. He had seen the 'Wee Wan in the green silk', and she had soaked right through him. He wanted to go straight home to the West Lodge, where his family lived, and send for the priest. He knew he was going to die.

"'This,' said Alan the professor, 'this all comes of having no Manual of Deportment Towards Ghosts. No ghost should be put to the painful necessity of soaking through a large-sized servant man, in order to draw his attention to her presence. In fact no ghost should ever be

permitted to proceed through any one—nor should any one be allowed to proceed through a ghost. It is distinctly unwholesome—it interferes with the heart's action subsequently. Besides I, don't believe there aint no sich thing.'

"'But,' argued the Colonel, (he was always rather a sentimental dog) 'it might be a pretty ghost—and young. Suppose a man wants to kiss a ghost. How do you think he should proceed—he can't hold a spook can he?'

"Nesta was shocked. She considered that ghosts had got over that kind of nonsense. She was always very sensible about kissing herself. 'I'm sure,' she said, 'if I met Sir Desmond, who haunts the gallery, I would not think much about his kissing me, or I him.'

"That rather interested the Colonel, and the middy too. Said the middy—

"'What would you do?'

"'I'd run away,' said Nesta. And Mamie agreed she would run away too: this when they knew by report that the aforesaid Sir Desmond was a broth of a boy—and beautiful to behold. That roused up the Professor, and he discoursed—

"'Now,' said he, (remember, Dearlove, he was but young, and his profession was Greek. But he knew a great many other things, and

was specially learned in Dreams and Ghosts and Fairy-lore, because as you will recollect he didn't believe in them.) 'Now,' he said 'that's an exact proof of my contention. We badly need a set of regulations and rules in regard to our conduct towards ghosts. Wherever one meets them—be it in the family circle, the drawing room, or in the privacy of one's bedroom, there is apparently but one settled method of procedure—running away, and that as quickly as possible. I blush for the manners of my kind. Would I could mend them—but alas! they would not wait. Alas!'

"That rather put my back up. 'Alas!' said I, 'by all means, but if your ancestors have bolted from time unknown—the natural inclination remains.'

"'Pray,' asked the Professor, 'have you ever seen a ghost?'

"'Sir,' said I, 'I have—heaps and piles of them.' I indicated my dimly lighted ancestral gallery. 'One of them I have encountered dozens of times—and always ran away. Yet she is not what you would call unattractive, had I but the courage to chuck her under the chin.'

"So Alan asked Ganpa to tell him all about her. He seemed to take far more interest in the young and lovely spooks than in the broth of a boy

whom Mamie and Nesta treated with such rudeness.

“‘Who is she?’ asked the Professor. So Ganpa informed him. ‘She was killed in the time of Henry VII,’ explained Ganpa, ‘and buried in the hall, because the castle was besieged. She was most beautiful, a great heiress, and only sixteen years old.’

“‘Oh!’ mused the midddy. ‘Now that was hard lines—sixteen!’

“Alan turned to us and rehearsed a very telling speech.

“‘There!’ he said, with his hands spread out in horror—‘There you are!’ as if he were stricken with sorrow for our shortcomings in the affair. And you know *we* didn’t kill her. ‘There you are,’ he went on, waving his hands at us. ‘A most beautiful, young, charming and interesting family spook, fragile and tender, who probably wants to lean on some one, or anyhow to improve her acquaintance with her family. And what does the family do in return? It runs away like one man. What must she think of them—of us, who have married into it? The family I mean. From her point of view our conduct can have but one aspect—it is deplorable. Simply deplorable—entirely lacking in good taste or distinction—or in fact common decency. Let us suppose, for

the sake of euphony, that when the ghosts met us they dropped things, and fell down in a state of unconsciousness, or bellowed like bulls of Bashan and either gaped upon us with their mouths, or suddenly remembered their prayers. It must be excessively embarrassing to be prayed at. Suppose their eyes went like—er—like Mickey's—their teeth chattered, and their hair stood on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine. Suppose they tried to exorcise us every time they got the chance, and blessed themselves tremblingly when we wanted a little cheerful conversation about the weather. We—we wouldn't take to it all kindly. We should probably say things about their manners. We should probably throw things, which the poor dear ghosts, being incorporeal, can't. There can be very little satisfaction to a spook in talking back. It—I call it It for the sake of euphony—can't manage to get any emphasis on things. If a spook gets on a man's nerves, he can always throw a chunk of coal at it, or the fender, or smash it with the furniture. But the unfortunate spook can't even raise a dust out of the carpet. It is horribly handicapped by having no substantiality. But it has a way of turning up again smiling, so to speak, that curdles one's blood sometimes. And it does get back a bit of its own, when you don't happen

to be thinking. We have a ghost of our own at Felstair—it has an irritating and perfectly senseless habit of trying to wash out some stains under one of the family carpets. Once an old lady we had on a visit woke up in the night season and watched her at it. She gave her some advice. “Wash it,” she said. Then remembering there might be some scarcity of a certain element in the place where she belonged, she added kindly and explanatorily, “*With water you know.*” Which so annoyed that ghost that she got up and did something awful to the well-meaning old lady—blasted her, I think, in her bed. One needs to be exceedingly circumspect in regard to ghosts—you can hardly ever guess their feelings, and especially you need to keep your helm steady till you know their blasting capacities. Some are gifted in that line, and their interviewers are always discovered in the morning with staring eyes, and all the other etceteras—horribly bad style and unbecoming. Personally I would never interfere with the occupation of any spectral lady or gentleman. If they want to rub things out let ’em—I don’t mind. But of course what we really want is a manual to instruct us on the right method in every case. Generalizing, so to speak, but with a fair idea of the average spook and its requirements.’

"Now this was all very fine, but when we suggested he should take notes and write that little book himself, he seemed shy. He said he had never met any ghosts, and didn't understand their tone. So Mamie said to him, she thought he might guess at what one ought to do if one met a really nice ghost—a ghost about seventeen, with a rose in her hair, and pretty bare white arms. He said it depended, or he thought it did.

"If it's a really nice kissable ghost—and warm—I would be fraternal—quite. I have never heard of platonic friendships with pretty young spooks, but it sounds distinctly promising. But if it is a spectre in chains and groans I would pass. Never allow that kind of spook to become intimate with you—they lack refinement, and always want to curdle your young blood. With ghosts that carry arms you can't be too careful. The Tudor spook, for instance—they knew far too many spells and incantations in Tudor times. Don't have any truck with them. The Neolithic ghost is another to be avoided—he is most coarse and unrefined. But I should consider the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century spooks would repay cultivation—especially the ladies—they are so pretty!—so distinguished—so altogether fine. With them it is a good plan to place the right

hand carefully over the right side—and make a good leg—going through the action of offering rappee at the same time—be witty—sparkle—take snuff.’

“He did all these things before us, as he went on, and Mamie disappeared from our midst without his ever noticing it. The taking snuff business reminded him of his cigarette case, and when he had slapped all his pockets he begged us to excuse him. He would give us the rest when he came back.

“He went across the gallery into his room. Nesta had departed just a second before. In about three minutes there was the most frightful outcry, and in rushed our Oxford Professor. Mamie staggered in after him, and Nesta unblushingly supported herself against the door, while she held her sides and shrieked.

“‘It’s true!’ cried the Professor, sinking into a chair, his face the colour of a sheet. ‘I saw her!’

“Ganpa asked him to take some wine, and he seemed to feel better after.

“‘Good heavens!’ he exclaimed faintly. ‘I didn’t believe it possible—ghosts? A young ghost—in a green dress—and so pretty—lamentably pretty!’

“‘Did you place one hand——’ I asked him.

“But the others made such a noise that I could

get no satisfaction. Then Mamie slid into her place, laughing consumedly. 'Sparkle!' scoffed she. 'The only sparks I saw came out of his heels as he shot downstairs. He ought to buy a manual of deportment towards ghosts, he needs it.'

" 'I—I—I thought she might be going to wash out a stain or something,' apologized the Professor.

" Mamie laughed, and Nesta laughed. So did we all.

" 'I didn't expect you to sparkle,' said Nesta, 'but you needn't have been quite so abrupt, need you now?'

" 'Give me some more wine,' begged the Professor. 'I am shaken to my very soul. I assure you I thought she was going to wash out stains—and I always give precedence to that sort of spook.'

" 'Ah yes!' said I, 'what we need is manners—deportment. Why exclude the poor char-spooks? Their lot is sufficiently hard already.'

" 'I believe he has seen the Wee Wan,' said Ganpa.

" 'The Wee Wan,' said the Professor with determination in his eye. 'In that case I shall sleep somewhere else. I don't want the Wee Wan, or any Wan, philanderin' round my apartments

when I'm asleep. Let somebody else write that manual.' ”

Chris looked round as he came to an end. The German Professor was still holding the little book to his shortsighted eyes, scribbling for dear life. General Kerr was sitting pulling his thick moustaches, his eyes fixed on Mamie, who looked dreaming out over the roofs of St. Peter Port. Nesta sat smiling among a host of memories—and Ganpa was watching the grim old Judge. Dearlove had laid her head on his arm and fallen asleep, and he was sitting bolt upright, intently regarding a long tress of her silky brown hair, that had blown across his shrivelled fingers

CHAPTER XX

DEARLOVE ADMITS ANOTHER TO THE MAKE-BELIEVE

“**W**HAT I would like,” remarked General Kerr, carefully placing his damp towels under his garden chair, as he turned to Dearlove, already radiant in scarlet and gold, “is admittance to the Make-Believe. Come, now, dear young lady, couldn’t you strain a point? After all, I’m as young as Chris, though hardly so good-looking, but my heart is in the right place. Try me. I’ve strained a good many points for Chris.”

“Have you?” asked Dearlove, with an air of polite inquiry; “that’s most int’restin’. How did you?”

“Once,” said the General solemnly, “I lent him the only coat I possessed. When he gave it back to me it was only mosquito netting, there were so many holes in it. But I said er—er—nothing. Another time I had a tin of sardines.”

“Yes,” urged Dearlove breathlessly. “I *love* sardines; go on.”

"He ate them, tin and all," concluded General Kerr, "and again I said—er—nothing."

"It was most awf'ly nice of you, then," praised Dearlove cordially. "I would have said lots. Pe'haps he was most frightfully hungry. Was it when you were boys?"

"No," answered the General, with a queer little laugh; "it was when we were men, and I think we were both rather hungry. One does get full up of horse sausage after months and years of it; but in justice to Chris, I must confess I had a box of sardines too."

"Oh!" breathed Dearlove thankfully. "I *am* glad. Horse sausage must be disgustin'. I couldn't like it, but there's a girl at school, a German girl, an' she says it's nice."

"She is welcome to my share," replied the General. "I never want to eat it any more."

"Was that at Ladysmith?" asked Reggie timidly.

Reggie's transparent cheeks had a faint tinge of pink in them; his wet hair lay smoothed out on his white forehead, shining and thick, showing the beautiful proportions of his head; and his eyes were like wet violets, very soft and deep and sweet. The General looked down on him with a kindly eye, and his big voice took on a deeper tone as he answered. He had liked

Reggie at first, and now this morning Chris and he had taken the little boy to the men's pool for a swim before breakfast ; and the pluck of the child, his courage and implicit confidence in his friend, had won his unqualified admiration.

"Yes, Reggie," he said, "that was at Lady-smith ; but we were at Eton together, you know, and we had some experiences in common. Oh, yes."

There was a little silence, in which the pungent fragrance of the carnations came up to them, as they sat on the green grass.

"Have you ever Make-Believed ?" asked Dearlove abruptly.

"Rather !" There was a hopeless laugh in his voice, and his humorous mouth twisted derisively. "I've been making believe for nearly twenty years, Dearlove, without a soul to keep me company. It's slow work, but I keep going on—like old boots."

"Oh !" doubted she.

Reggie looked at him with a searching gaze, and a rush of inexplicable sympathy, for no reason at all.

"You try me," urged the General, tapping his shoe with his stick, his eyes fixed on her. "You'll find me no end of a make-believer."

"Well," cogitated Dearlove, her little white

teeth in her under lip. "I must think—don't disturb me." She put her elbows on her knees and thought, gazing out over the roofs of St. Peter Port at the glory of the enchanted island of Herm, all set with jewels and glittering like Moy Mell, in the morning sun.

"Can you run?" she questioned suddenly.

"Like Billy-O," returned the General.

"All right," concluded Dearlove cheerfully. "After breakfast I'll run you; if you can beat me, you can come into the Make-Believe; if you can't, you won't. There's only a little bit of it left," she added tearfully, "so it doesn't really matter much. And I do like you."

"And that will be all right!" exclaimed the General heartily, with an air of huge content. "But why wait till after breakfast? Now's the time! And there is the course." He pointed a long brown finger at the smooth white gravel walk round the little lawn. Dearlove, who had been swinging her pretty feet off a chair much too high for her, instantly slipped down, and stood beside him.

"I'm ready," she said simply. "Reggie will be umpire. Now 'tention!"

The General removed his coat and laid it on his chair, his stick on top of it, and turned himself about to race.

"Bell-horses," chanted Dearlove, "bell-horses, what time of day? One o'clock, two o'clock, three and away!"

"Off!" cried Reggie, wriggling on his seat in his excitement.

The General could run. Everybody who knew him knew that, but he had his work cut out to keep abreast of Dearlove; she ran with the incredible swiftness of the little girl, her feet in their bronze leather shoes seeming hardly to touch the ground, and she looked like a scarlet comet with a nebulous trail of golden brown behind her. They arrived breathless and panting at Reggie's chair, and threw themselves simultaneously down before him on the grass.

"How's that, umpire?" questioned the General.

"You won," judged Reggie triumphantly. He had wanted the General to win, because he instinctively divined that more depended on his winning than he could understand. "Right O! you came in first."

"That's because his neck is longer than mine," declared Dearlove bitterly, in a succession of quick gasps, clasping her hands about her slim white throat.

"I'm sorry," pleaded the General, but Reggie thought his eyes looked glad.

"Umph!" remarked Dearlove.

"Let's say it's a dead heat," advised the General.

But Dearlove's generous soul scoffed at the idea. "No!" she cried. "You did come in first, an' so you're in the Make-Believe; but remember you can't be any more'n 'leven in it, so you'll have to grow down really. *Mind.*"

"With all my soul," said the General fervently. "Isn't there any ritual or anything, any oath? I'll swear anything with joy."

"What's your Christian name?" asked Dearlove majestically.

The General appeared abashed and apologetic. "I'm sorry," he deprecated mournfully, "that my godfathers and godmothers were so unromantic they gave me an odd name—not euphonious—Andy."

Dearlove lifted a sparkling countenance towards him. "Oh, what joy," she cried poetically. "Do you know, I simply *love* St. Andrew. When I was a little girl at the Convent, I wanted him to play with, an' Rev. Mother said: 'Of course not, child, but you can always come an' look at him.' He is such a duckie-darlin'. So I used to go and look at him, an' when nobody was there' I used to take him down an' hug him, an'

pretended he was my best doll—an' his name was Andy ! ”

She fairly glowed with delight at this reminiscence of her own irreverence.

The General heard it without moving a muscle of his tanned face.

“ I hope you won't do that to me,” he begged. “ I'm frightfully shy.”

She made great haste to reassure him.

“ Oh, no ! ” she protested hastily ; “ course not ; you aren't *Saint* Andrew.”

“ No,” agreed the General meekly.

The loud boom of the gong called them to breakfast. Chris came down whistling softly to himself, lifted Reggie off his seat and hoisted him up to a shoulder. Nesta strolled across the grass, cool and fair in her trailing muslin skirts, a rose pinned in her blonde pretty hair.

“ Nesta,” called Dearlove importantly. “ This,” pointing a finger at the General, “ is to be a boon-companion. He is let into the Make-Believe.”

Chris broke off in his tune, halted and confronting his friend, with the little lad on his shoulder, whistled in quite a different kind of way. Nesta gave a little sharp cry of surprise, and perhaps satisfaction. The General stood holding Dearlove's hand, his tanned features slowly

assuming a purplish - brown tint, excessively unbecoming.

"Ah!" observed Nesta. "So!" She picked up her frothy skirts and dropped him a mocking curtsy. "Welcome, Andy!" said she, and she laughed softly.

The General flourished his stick, and bowed to her with solemn air, utterly unabashed. "Thank you," was his observation.

Mamie, coming quickly up to them, was surprised at Nesta's exclamation and the reply. The smile lurking in her brother's eyes, too, rather puzzled her.

"Eh?" she said. "What's this?"

"So well you may say," rejoined Nesta merrily; "there is another boon-companion; his name is —Andy."

Her smile was a fine mingling of mischief and laughter, with a touch of wistfulness thrown in.

"Oh!" said Mamie faintly.

Dearlove shook her mane of brown hair despondently. "There is only a little wee bittie of the Make-Believe left," she remarked with profound gloom, "so you needn't mind, Ducky-darlin'."

"I don't mind," flashed Mamie in sudden haste. "Do not think that. Pray are we to have breakfast to-day or to-morrow?"

And she resolutely refused to meet the new boon-companion's eyes, looking any way but near to him. She held up her arms to Reggie, perched on her brother's shoulder, and holding on with little thin hands clasped on his head.

"Come down," she invited, "and say good-morning to me."

Chris lowered him slowly till he rested on her arm, and she held him tightly for a moment, her cheek laid against his. Then a sudden rush of anxiety transformed her from her usual quiet aspect. "My little sweetheart," she said tenderly, "you are much too thin," and she passed her hands up his shabby sleeve with a kind of horror in her eyes.

Nesta took him quickly from her and carried him into the breakfast room, where she sat in her chair at the head of the table, holding him for a few moments. She kissed him quietly then, and placed him in a seat beside her. He was wrapped in such a dream of happiness that she felt it pain to look at him. Yet Nesta had made up her mind, and she was about to take the long premeditated step. The little arms in the thin darned coat were absolutely fleshless—Reggie was little more than a skeleton again—and all in a fortnight, for Nesta had begun to pride herself that he was getting quite fat.

"Dear wee son," she said in her soft Scots tongue, than which there is nothing sweeter in the world to suffering or sorrow. "You must eat a good breakfast, for I am going to send you out in the donkey cart all morning with Dearlove. And I, Reggie, am going to tell Mary Bawn that you are staying with us for a while."

The pain that always slept in the depths of his eyes woke with a flash to the surface, and looked out in agony.

"Don't," he whispered, "because—because it will make it so much worse—*afterwards*."

Nesta put a slim white hand across his, clasped pathetically on the edge of the table.

"And why, my wee son," she said softly, "should there be any afterwards? There may not be."

The next instant she was laughing up at Chris with a sweet seriousness, very lovable, after her gay mockery on the lawn. Chris went to the sideboard and cut himself some ham, then came and sat by Reggie. Ganpa came in and found the General filling a plate for Dearlove, and bade him good-morning. Ganpa had been to church—the little windy church on the hill-top—where the fisherman and the old white-haired priest at the altar sang an interminable duet together on Sundays and feast days. He passed a hand over

Reggie's head, and let it slide on to his big son's shoulder, and the big son pressed it there affectionately.

"Mornin', Ganpa," he said. "I have news for you. Behold the new Make-Believer. Kerr has come in."

"Ho!" Ganpa wheeled about and looked at the General. "Kerr!" and there was decided amusement, and incredulous amusement, too, in voice and look.

"Sir," returned the General, "I will thank you to call me Andy. I am received into this companionship."

Ganpa laughed, even as Chris and Nesta had done.

"I'm glad to hear it," he said, his eyes twinkling under their thick thatch. "Another victim."

The General did not reply to this sally, but merely looked across at Mamie, who was not laughing at all. Then suddenly, and for no reason that Dearlove could see, Mamie slowly coloured a most beautiful faint pink, from her chin to the roots of her hair, and looked down at the bread on her plate, as if it were a something that needed study of the deepest and most attentive description.

The General sat down beside her and reached out for the honey.

"Will you have some honey?" he asked confusedly. "You used to like it, Mar—Mamie."

"That is a very long time ago," she said faintly, the colour swiftly disappearing from her cheeks. "And one outgrows honey."

Dearlove regarded her with unmitigated horror and surprise.

"Mamie," she exploded, "I *am* surprised! Yesterday you and me ate a whole sechion. Of course," she continued regretfully, shaking her head, "you can't get much out of one sechion thing, because when you take out a good spoonful, it simply runs out of all the little holes the bees make, an' it isn't good manners to scoop it off the dish. I wish there were no manners of that sort. Manners generally make you do the things you don't want to, an' say you're not to do the things you like. I'm sure it would be awful convenient to be able to lick your plate sometimes, 'specially when you've got a good lot of honey on it, or cream. I wonder why God didn't think of that when He made us—cats never leave anythin' they like. It's the same with peppermint creams. They're never made large enough—an' if you put two in your mouth at the same time people say you're rude. I think grown-ups are hateful."

"So they are," agreed Ganpa; "let us forget them, Dearlove. What is on to-day?"

"After breakfast," said Dearlove pensively, "we're goin' to have chariot races. I'm goin' to be the chariot, with Sambo an' the cart, an' Chris an' Andy are goin' to be the racers."

"And what am I to be?" questioned Ganpa seriously, "and Reggie?"

"Oh," explained Dearlove quickly, "of course you're to be the judges, an' give away the golden prize."

"I, at least, have a part that suits me," commented Ganpa affably. "I wish the racers a good race."

After breakfast the two friends were smoking quietly in the veranda. Nesta had gone off with Mamie in a little victoria to the married quarters to interview Mary Bawn. Dearlove was somewhere indoors, completing her preparations for the chariot races, and Ganpa sat with Reggie, showing him some beautiful water-colours of his old Highland castle, with its hanging woods of grim firs and pine, and its silent mirroring loch.

"Chris," began Andy suddenly, "do you remember the sortie on Gun Hill?"

Chris wheeled round in his chair, abruptly alert and rigid; the sound of Andy's voice had the ring of steel in it, the clash of arms.

"Remember!" he breathed, as a man might breathe on guard.

General Kerr sat bolt upright, the pipe forgotten in his lean fingers, his eyes all puckered up, and his mouth drawn.

"I went," he continued, "gladly. But you—when I remember you that night——" He broke off abruptly and stared at Chris in the sunlight, as if he saw him as a stranger, and one he failed to understand.—"In the name of God," he said in quick sudden passion, "how could you ? with them to think of."

Chris waved a hand vaguely behind him and around.

"Because of them—of her," he said awkwardly, "One does things like that—for them—you know——"

"After all it was useless."

"After all," sighed Chris softly, tapping his teeth with his pipe stem. "But one can't tell, you know, Andy. It might be——"

But General Kerr was thinking aloud in the brilliant sun, in the fragrant golden peace of the island day, with the little huddled roofs of the old Norman town below him.

"Lord !" he said under his breath, as it were. "To think of that night—the smell of blood—the yells of the wounded—the cries, the thunder of the guns—and this—and to have such a chance as I have given me—of going back to eleven—

and being young again—forgetting it all—wiping it out and being a boy again”—He laughed quietly—“Chris,” he said, laying his lean hand on his friend’s sleeve. “What a good thing it would be for all the world if it could go back to childhood for a while every now and then, and forget the sordidness and bloodthirstiness, and the infidelities, and just be a little child again. Lord, how different a lot of us would be!”—He laughed again—“I didn’t know how young I could be till I met that young imp,” he said. “And I am looking forward to sport, for my old uncle is coming up to-day. He hates children,” and he looked sideways at Chris, who roared aloud, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

“I hear her in the hall,” he remarked. “We’d better find something to cover our heads.”

CHAPTER XXI

NESTA AND MARY BAWN

MARY BAWN was sitting inside her kitchen door sewing. The morning was very hot, and pearly, and the little plot of carnations and verbena in the tiny front garden was fragrant in the wind off the sea. There were ruddled pots on her white window-sills too, that gave off little heady gusts of sweetness, and over the lattice-work porch—the work of her husband's hands—a big yellow rose hung down fragrant bunches of bud and blossom—long, beautiful, suggestive-looking rose blooms, that made one dreamy to look at.

All Mary Bawn's day's work was finished. Her little house was swept and garnished, and full of flowers, a little house that in its immaculate cleanliness might have satisfied a duchess, if the duchess asked only for pure air, and sweet savours, comfort of a homely sort, and exquisite order—with Mary's kindly companionship and ready wit.

She had done so early in the day because the Colonel had come for her darling early, and taken

him away for a swim before breakfast. Mary ought to have been happy in that memory as she bent over her work. But by the way she shook her head, and puckered up her brows below her white hair, you could easily see she was far from it.

Her eyes had failed her after India and South Africa, and she had lately taken to spectacles. Perhaps they did not exactly suit her kind blue eyes, for she had great difficulty in threading her needle, and in using it after it was threaded.

And between every stitch she would shake her head, and whisper something in her soft Irish tongue that sounded far from satisfaction.

She was making a little shirt, Nesta saw that instantly as she came up the shell-bordered path between the carnations, and she had another little pang at the sight. For somehow she hated the little shirts Reggie wore, in spite of their delicate needlework, and the softness and fineness of the nainsook of which Mary made them. Perhaps it was because her woman's eye so swiftly discovered them to be merely clever—oh! extraordinarily clever—patchwork. Mary bought little remnants at the shops, and pieced them together with infinite pains, that her beloved might not have to wear coarse stuff next his tender little body, but be clothed like his own sort, the "Quality."

She looked up at the sound of steps, and greeted her visitors with a cry of pleasure, overwhelming them with inquiries, driving them before her the while, in the direction of her best room. They would both have much rather sat in the green lattice porch under the tea-rose, but Mary's pride and joy in her best room were not to be denied. Besides, it would have wrung Mary's heart to have Master Reggie's friends sitting at her kitchen door. "We are all very well, Mary," Nesta assured her as they seated themselves under her command in two gaily cushioned wicker chairs, "and flourishing like the green baytree." Mary did not understand the allusion, but she grasped the fact that Nesta meant it for a simile of well-being, and was rejoiced accordingly. Then the conversation came to a sudden halt, and hung faltering, while Mary Bawn stood with one hand on her apron band, and the other smoothing down its edge, looking inquiringly from Mamie to Nesta.

"Mary," began Nesta determinedly, "I have asked you several times to let me have Master Reggie to stay with me, and now I am not going to beg any longer. I have just made up my mind that he is going to stay with me till we leave Guernsey—I must have him, Mary, for a little while."

Nesta looked for opposition, for outcry and remonstrance; to her surprise there was none. Mary simply grew a little grey in the cheeks, and dark in the eyes, and her lips set—perhaps to hide a tremble—while her work-lined fingers paused momentarily in the smoothing of her apron edge.

“Yis, m’ lady,” she said very softly, “for a little while is it? The Dear knows if it’s more than a little while any of us ’ill be keepin’ him. Sure I ixpected ye’d say this.” She passed both palms slowly over the back of the chair by which she stood, her eyes cast down, then lifting them suddenly went on—

“’Tis hard,” she said, with a hoarse little tremor in her voice, “to see him wastin’ away like that, an’ to be doin’ nothin’—nothin’ that will keep him—for he has but the one thought, an’ ’tis to be with yez. An’ what’s to be done at all when yez do be gone?” She shook her head. “’Tis plenty good enough for me to see him happy. What an’ all can I do when ye’re gone?”

“We will write to him every week,” said Mamie quickly.

Mary regarded her with a sorrowful little glance, and then her eyes removed to Nesta. “Barrin’ yerselves,” she returned in her low, monotonous tone, “he never knew never a one av his own sort ;

if he'd a bin like the other childer, mabby the Colonel's lady or the chaplain's wife ud a took to him ; but they never did, an' he was all for books an' dreams an' writin' on the little bits of paper that Paddy would be bringin' him, or mabby in a scrapeen av a book Himself would give, but never a word to anybody.

"Wanst it was he was out, an' thim little divils of common childer druv him back to me with mud and anything they could lay hand to—pelted him in to me. I saw the little heart burstin, his body with the shame av it. Och yis ! Sure I'm thankful he had the laste little taste of happiness afore he will be tuk. It won't be long. I can see the sun shinin' through him now. So I'm sayin' nothin'. Do yez be keepin' him, ladies, an' God bless ye, though there bis times when I can't tell if it isn't a bad day he iver clapped eyes on yez, or if 'twas in answer to me prayers ye come. Anyway he's happy, och yis ! and it can't be long !"

"Mary," protested Nesta encouragingly, "I think you may be wrong—I hope so—for I love the little man dearly, and that is why I want him. Not only while I am here, but to take with me to London, so that I can show him to a famous doctor I know, who loves little children, and who may straighten him—cure him, Mary Bawn."

Mary shook her head determinedly. "No, lady," she said, "niver in this worrld ! niver !"

"Oh, but," insisted Mamie, "I assure you it is possible, Mary, so please do not put any obstacle in our way. Let us have him."

Cried Mary, "Is it me would be stoppin' him when he wants to go ? No, lady. But it's Paddy has all to say to him, for he's his guardian."

She turned her head aside for an instant as a big shadow fell across her snow-white muslin blinds, and the gay pots in the window. "'Tis Paddy himself," she said ; "I'll jist be givin' him a call."

She went to the door and called him, and he came, twirling his cap in his enormous hands, blushing painfully, and looking down on them with a lurking smile in his wide grey Irish eyes, a diffident, shy, kindly giant—wax in the hands that moulded him. Even if Paddy had wanted to say no he could never have said it to Nesta.

He cleared his throat several times before he could find courage to answer her. "I wouldn't be refusin' to let Master Reggie go wid ye," he replied with difficulty, "an' I have the right to let him go, but I'm feared."

Nesta looked inquiringly at him as he paused, and twirled his cap furiously round.

"Of what ?" she asked.

"Of his mother, m' lady," he answered bluntly and unexpectedly.

"His mother!" She looked at Mamie in utter dismay. In the time that had elapsed since that afternoon when they had first met him, they had completely lost sight of the fact that his mother had been present on that occasion, and among the Governor's guests, so evidently a person of importance. Their hearts sank. What manner of mother was she, who arrayed herself like the lilies of the field, while Mary Bawn stitched like this for her little son?

"Who is she?" asked Mamie faintly.

"Ye may well ask," remarked Mary darkly, "for none av us know, not even Paddy. She does be sayin' she's the child's mother, but she mayn't be."

"Oh, she's his mother right enough," assured Paddy regretfully. "I do remember her well."

"Ye may say that," commented Mary acidly, "though she forgets it."

"She's forgotten more nor me, since then," answered Paddy without sarcasm.

"'Tis the rare old fantigue she'd be cuttin'," resumed Mary bitterly, "if she does be comin' here an' findin' him gone, for her one thought—may God forgive her!—is waitin' till he's dead, an' 'Is he likely to live much longer?' she says to

me. Oh ! the heart av ice in that woman would freeze the sun in the sky."

"Oh!" murmured Nesta faintly, while Mamie sat with horrified expression—such a mother as this for their little poet was a terrible discovery—worse than anything they had ever suspected.

"But," puzzled Nesta, in a tone of bewilderment, "I do not understand, Paddy, how, if his mother is alive, you come to be his guardian?"

"He was left to me," explained Paddy simply, "be Captain—be his father. Whin I first joined the Army I was his servant, m' lady, an' then I went an spicial service to the Cape, an' at Spion Kop we were fightin' side be side, an' he—he was shot, m' lady. But before he died he drew up a will, an' the chaplain—Father Dunne it was—was there an' fixed it all lawful an' square, so's I was left guardian, till I could lave little Master Reggie wid his grandfather. But somehow he forgot to be puttin' in where I could find the ould gentleman, an' what his name was, so it will be takin' a long while. And after we buried him I wint down to the farm where the child was—in a Cape cart wid his ayah—an' a black boy lookin' after her. Mary was at the front wid the nurses, waitin' on thim, an' I give Master Reggie to her,

an' sint her down to Capetown, an' the Colonel he sent her home an' Master Reggie along with her. But afore she wint, there was this lady tryin' to get him from her, an' she proved to Father Dunne she was his mother as I well knew. But the Captain he said to me, niver on no account to let her have him, an' he had his rasons for that same."

"Doubtless," said Nesta, and she shuddered; "otherwise it would be too terrible for her."

"And you have had Reggie ever since?" questioned Mamie.

"Iver since," agreed Mary.

"And I daresay," reflected Nesta in a soft little voice, "you have been provided with the means to care for him as you do?"

There was a little silence between them for a while, and she saw the brother and sister exchange glances of distress.

"I see," she continued, and Nesta's voice was like the sound of doves. "I see. Ah! it will be repaid a thousandfold."

Mary Bawn threw up her wrinkled hands with a passionate gesture of protest.

"Is it repay?" she asked vehemently, "to me that's lost three!"

There was another little silence after that, and in it Paddy, after one quick look from his sister to Nesta and Mamie, suddenly and noiselessly

disappeared with a look on his brown countenance as if he had been in church.

"Mary," said Nesta, bending towards her and speaking in a little soft whisper, "you have *had* them. You have held them in your arms and seen them——"

And then Mary Bawn came swiftly to where she sat, and went down on one knee before her, taking the jewelled white hand between her own, pressed a long forefinger on Nesta's wedding ring, and looking up with wide pathetic eyes the while she spoke. "Aye," she said in the low Irish voice, "I have so, m' lady—held them in me arrms, as you will hold yours—but niver seen them crowdin' at me knee, as I see yours this day. Aye, yellow heads and black, and the blessin' av the Almighty on thim all."

"Hush!" trembled Nesta, looking around fearfully. "That is my dream. Why do you speak it aloud, Mary?"

"Becas," replied Mary steadily, "'twill come true."

Nesta heaved a long tremulous sigh, and her eyes were like forget-me-nots with the dew on them; but she said no more, and Mary rose and stood by the little round table, looking at the carnations arranged in the big basin.

"And we will just keep Reggie till we see what

is going to happen," remarked Mamie quietly.

" 'Tis kind 'av ye, though I'll be missin' him sore," said Mary stonily.

" I wish we could find his father's people," sighed Nesta.

" Mabby 'tis as well so," returned Mary, " an' he so delicate ; he might be took where he couldn't fall back on Paddy, or me."

" And that would be rather terrible for him," reflected Nesta, pulling down her white veil.

" Thank you, Mary, for letting me have him, and I will take great care of him for you."

" I wish I knew his name ; what do you call him ? " asked Mamie.

" There has niver been no need to call him more nor Master Reggie," rejoined Mary. " But herself could be tellin' if she would, though many's the time I'm thinkin' Paddy knows more nor he tells."

" Is he fond of her ? " asked Nesta wistfully.

Mary, erect with scorn. " Is it fond of her ? " she inquired scathingly. " Did ye iver see a snowdrop in a March wind ? Faith, she freezes the swate soul in him."

And with that, and with rather heavy hearts in their bosoms, they said farewell to Mary, and she came to the porch to speed them, there to find Paddy gazing meditatively at the burnt grass on the roadside opposite.

He came to his feet and saluted them gravely, following them with his eyes as far as he could see, his thick brows knitted together in a puzzled form.

“Who an’ all?” he cried appealingly to the roses, “is it they do always be makin’ me think av?”

“Mercy be amongst us, an’ more too!” scoffed Mary Bawn. “Mabby ’tis yourself now.”

CHAPTER XXII

"POOR JINNY IS A-WEEPIN' "

"OH, Mamie! Oh, Nesta!" reproached Dearlove bitterly, "how late you are." Her hair was still wet from her dive off the edge of the pool; she had dispensed with her shoes and stockings, and was clad, to her own entire satisfaction, in a briefscarlet skirt and a tight fitting guernsey. She paused and patted down the spadeful of sand Reggie had just deposited on a huge heap, and having smoothed it to her taste resumed her complaint.

"You have been a long time," she said. "We had to pretend Chris and Andy were giants and Ganpa was a wizard, because we couldn't play any game while you were away."

"Where is Chris?" asked Nesta, looking round on the sea, the rocks and the sky.

"Here, of course," rejoined Dearlove, patting the heap she stood by with her spade.

"Reggie an' me killed him an' Andy, an' then we buried them, for fear the wizard of the cave would bring them back to life again."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mamie faintly, "won't they be rather smothered?"

There was a vast upheaval of sand and the two tall soldiermen sat up and blinked.

"We were allowed to keep our heads out," remarked Andy meekly, "perhaps you didn't observe my head, Mamie."

"No," said Mamie, growing very pink, "I didn't."

"Mamie," remarked her daughter, instructively flourishing her spade as one who announces a passing strange thing, "has most p'culiar eyes; she sort of sees things with them that are not there. Least, you can't see them, an' she can't see things everybody else sees. An' when you're talkin' to her, she says 'yes' and 'no,' an' if you weren't lookin' out you would never know she was saying them all in the quite wrong places; then she will say quite quick, 'I beg your pardon; what was it you said to me?'"

"If you look in her eyes, Andy, you will see they have sort of long-way passages in them, an' you go on an' on, an' you really never get to the bottom. I think the passages go back to her forgettory."

"I see," mused Andy, forgetting the sand in his short hair in his eagerness to explore Mamie's eyes. "That is most interesting!"

"There seems to be a passage a long way down

my ear," remarked Chris savagely, "and some enterprising hermit crab has made his home in it. Dearlove, I warn you that if any crab eats his way into my forgettory, I will hold you and Reggie responsible."

"There was a king once," meditated Dearlove slowly, "an' a gadfly went and burrowed in his ear, an' he shut it in a glass tower—I forget his name—I should have loved to have that fly!"

"For a pet," suggested Chris; "a gadfly for a pet sounds promising."

"Well," defended Dearlove indignantly, "Bruce had a spider."

"So he had," acknowledged Chris; "and if you could tame a spider, you could tame any mortal thing, even a black donkey."

"I s'pose," remarked Dearlove with much dignity, "you mean Sambo. Paddy said Sambo is a very gran'-spirited donkey, that's why he runs away with me an' scrapes me off, an' things like that sort. An' he is a most high-bred donkey too; I think he must have a Persian strain in him, because he has such a lovely fluffy tail."

"A proper Persian tail," added Andy with great enthusiasm. "Dearlove showed it to me, Mamie. Ups-a-Daisy isn't it with him."

Ganpa came across the sand, with his newspaper held behind him. Ganpa's eyes had twink-

led without ceasing ever since he saw Sir Algernon Fitzwygram running after Ups-a-Daisy, and they were twinkling now, brighter than Andy's under their thick white brows.

He looked at Nesta across the group, and asked her something with those bright eyes. She nodded gaily in return.

"Ah!" said Ganpa, drawing the sound long out with a sort of deep thankfulness in it.

"Well, Dearlove, what's the next entertainment?"

"Poor Jinny is a-weepin'," promptly responded Dearlove, "now Mamie an' Nesta's come."

She turned to Reggie, who was sitting with his thin hands clasped over his wooden spade and suddenly went down beside him.

"This is my f'vourit' game," she explained, "an' I think I must rather 'xplain about it Reggie."

He beamed up at her, a little hunched up bundle of absolute happiness. Reggie had at last completely banished his bugbear. He had no thought of time, and the present was absolutely his.

"Yes," he said in a little singing tone, "please do, Dearlove."

She looked round and up at the faces of the

Make-believers, and they dropped on the sand before her, seeing immediately it was to be an explanation of some length.

"I had a party once," she began with a little joyous gush of soft laughter, as if the memory of it overflowed within her. "It was last year at Christmas time, an' it was the most lovely party I ever had. I did enjoy myself. It wasn't a made-up party, with 'vitations an' all that, but a sort of s'prise party.

"It was Christmas Eve :—Ganpa an' Mamie an' me went to church, an' it was rather late, an' we were rather late comin' back, because the church was so full, you know, an' we waited a long time. An' when we came back we walked, because Ganpa said to me all about how sometimes Our Blessed Lord goes about on Christmas Eve, an' comforts people who are sick, or hungry or anything, or lonely. An' he took us through lots of streets where there were lots an' heaps of children—oh! such duckie dears!—an' they were all so cold, an' they had hardly any nice clothes, an' they had dirty faces, an' all the big little children had sort of littler children—such lots of babies. An' there was a shop where there were dolls—quite cheap an' most beautiful—for a penny; so I went in to buy some Christmas presents for the cats, an' Shuna, an' for my dolls, specially for my doll

Christina, whose birthday is at Christmas. I do pity her ; it must be simply awful to have your birthday on Christmas, because then you have to get all your Christmas boxes for birthday, an' your birthday presents for Christmas boxes. But when I was lookin' out I saw a little girl with a baby, an' the baby was sort of tied to her with a shawl, an' she was such a little weeny, teeny girl, an' her nose was quite flatted against the window. So I went out an' I asked her which of the lovely penny things she would have for a Christmas box, an' she took the doll I had bought for Christina and gave it to the baby, an' the baby put it in her mouth and simply crowed. She was a most sweet baby, with black eyes an' fluffy hair, an' a black nose. But when I was givin' her the doll 'bout a thousand little boys an' girls came an' looked, an' they were all with black cheeks or noses, or somethin', an' their hands were quite blue, an' they said nothin', but just looked, an' when I went in the shop again they all stood back. So the little girl with the baby said, ' Thank you, miss, we'll have a party with this yer doll.'

" So I felt rather unhappy, an' Ganpa said to me, ' If you like to give up——' "

At this point Dearlove caught herself hastily up in her narrative and shook her wet hair impatiently " No, no ! that is nothin' to do with

this. I forgot. He said I might have a party if I liked. So we asked every one of the little children boys an' girls, an' told them they might bring each two more. So you may guess we did have a lot, for they all came. An' it was such fun, because Ganpa and Mamie, an' Chris and Nesta, an' me, *all* went in cabs, an' bought the things for the party, because you see it was to be on Boxin' day an' all the shops would be shut.

"We did all kinds of things after the dinner ; it was a proper dinner, I must tell you, with turkey an' plum puddin'. An' we all waited at table, an' made them eat a good big lot, 'specially Ganpa. An' we had such lots of babies—heaps an' dozens of them—an' not one cried 'xcept one little boy ; an' when Teddy—Teddy's Nesta's little dog—an' he had never seen a little boy like that before, an' he simply wanted to show he was glad ; but the little boy thought he wanted to eat him, so he cried like anything. 'Want—e—e—go—home, wantee—go—home,' all the time, so Giles had to take him away. Nesta said he was frightened ; but I think it was because somebody had scrubbed all the skin off his nose washin' him. I must tell you, they were all most frightfully clean an' shinin', 'specially their noses.

"An' they were happy. So was I. An' we played blind-man's buff, an' hunt the slipper, an'

here we go roun', an' lots of things, till at last we could think of nothin' more, an' the little girl who had the dear baby with the black nose (at the window I mean) said she would teach me an' the rest some other games, an' they taught us such a lot, but the one I liked best was 'Poor Jinny is a-weepin.'

"Now you must all get up."

And they obediently rose. Chris and the rest knew the game. Andy was an able pupil, who snapped up the words immediately. Dearlove enacted the part of poor Jinny, who stands weeping at the top of her voice, while the rest of the players advance and recede, inviting her to confide the reason of her grief, and afterwards informing themselves, as if they had only inquired for form's sake, knowing all the while what it was.

Poor Jinny was a-weeping for her sweetheart who had in some mysterious manner—not explained—been reft away from her. She is advised to take another, whereon she selects one from the line, who enacts Jinny in her or his turn.

Dearlove had taken Reggie, who chose Mamie, who took Chris, who chose Ganpa, who chose Dearlove, who took Andy, who was bewailing his sad lot and forsaken estate into his handkerchief with realistic vigour, when a chair came to the bottom of the green Guernsey lane, and Sir

Algernon Fitzwygram descended, and walking over to where they were, surveyed his nephew's performance with a coldly critical eye.

He was a most impressive and lordly personality, for Sir Algernon Fitzwygram rejoiced in being the best dressed of His Majesty's judges. He wore a silk hat that gleamed like the sun, an immaculately fitting frock coat, and lavender trousers, white waistcoat, and white spats. He looked like Piccadilly on a July afternoon.

Dearlove looked and thought him quite beautiful. Ganpa went on hand in hand with her and Nesta, advancing and receding on the yellow sand, his eyes laughing merrily, but taking no manner of notice of his old schoolfellow, who leaned majestically on his cane, and refrained from interrupting General Kerr's performance.

Till it came to the moment for him to select a new sweetheart, then Sir Algernon Fitzwygram said icily, "Feeling any better, boy?"

Andy paused for an instant in consternation, which was quickly succeeded by righteous and hot indignation. "Go away," he commanded, stopping with right hand outheld before the arrested line of players.

"Eh?" asked Sir Algernon blankly. "Why, Andy?"

"Go away!" thundered Andy. "Andy! I'm

Jinny, and I want to do my weeping and courting in peace, and undisturbed by my connexions. I don't go and make hay of your games with that old German Hochiemer, do I now ? ”

Sir Algernon cast a fearful glance around him. “ I've given him the slip,” he said in a whisper— “ told him I was going to pay a call.”

“ Oh, indeed,” commented General Kerr bitterly. “ Well, why don't you—I don't care—I've grown down—I'm only eleven—I don't know anything about calls. Go and hit somebody your own size.”

Sir Algernon flushed darkly, and moved from one foot to the other, looking at his lovely self reflected in the brilliant polish of his patent leather toes, and all the while the game waited for him.

He looked up abruptly and caught Dearlove's wondering and speculative eye, and, to her utter amazement, winked—yes, the dry-as-dust, solemn and misogynistic Sir Algernon Fitzwygram winked at Dearlove Gordon.

“ I—or—I'm not,” he said with a lamentable absence of sense and grammar, “ I'm not——”

“ Look here,” he suddenly burst out, “ I don't see why I shouldn't join the dance. I—I would rather like it, you know, young lady, if you will let me in too ; will you ? ”

They all turned and looked at her, all but Andy,

and he, prevented in his intention of taking out Mamie, was both bitter and scornful.

"You!" he scoffed. "You! Carry me out and let me die! Play Poor Jinny in a top hat. Go home, old man. Go home and leave us children to our play. It's my turn to choose."

But Dearlove was not to be hurried; she just stood still. Sir Algernon removed his top hat, and placed it gently and tenderly on the sand at his feet.

A sudden light sprang into Dearlove's eyes.

"I'll let you in!" she cried wildly. "I'll let you in if you'll play follow-my-leader and jump over that hat?"

"Done!" said Sir Algernon solemnly. "Lead off."

And instantly the whole party was tearing over rocks and pools, and little mounds of sea-pink and scabious; while the noise they made could have been heard in St. Peters Port, had it not been that some sailor men were pretending that St. Peters Port was besieged, and were defending it with guns.

Dearlove led them all round the rocks and back again, over the pools and little mounds, and took one flying leap, high in the air, over Sir Algernon's hat, and every one of them followed suit.

Now there were some people across from them,

who had laid out their luncheon on a nice clean white cloth. It was a very nice luncheon, and very nicely set out, and these people were about to enjoy themselves immensely. While the make-believers merely sang and played Poor Jinny, they were mildly contemptuous and pitying. "Trippers!" they said, and shook their heads, regretting to each other the impossibility of getting away from common people who played low games on the sands.

But when they saw a procession of tall men and really quite nicely attired ladies following madly in the wake of a wild little girl who wore no shoes or stockings, and the procession wound up by the unmistakable and distinguished figure of one of His Majesty's judges, attired as only immaculately well-bred old gentlemen know how to attire themselves, and they witnessed the spectacle of this old gentleman leaping high over his own hat—while the others of this party stood around in various attitudes of exhaustion, laughing uproariously, they suddenly, and standing on no order of going, rose and departed, leaving the luncheon behind for the party of lunatics.

Sir Algernon pointed dumbly at them as they fled, scrambling in their haste over rocks and stones. "Tell 'em," he panted. "Tell 'em."

And then the picnics, with yells and screeches

departed with even more haste, farther and farther into the distance, labouring under the delusion that the Make-believers were all mad, and in hot pursuit of them with murderous intention.

And the Make-believers ought to have been smitten with a sorrow for the poor picnics, but they were not; they went and inspected the lunch, and pronounced it "not at all bad," and if it had not been for Chris and Andy, Ganpa and Sir Algernon would have sat down and eaten it. For the peculiar thing about the Make-believe seemed to be, as Dearlove pantingly remarked to Andy, "That the older you were, the younger you seem to get—Ganpa," she said, "an' the little blinky man were really very naughty boys."

And Andy gloomily agreed with her. "Especially my old boy," he said.

You see he had been done out of his choice at Poor Jinny.

CHAPTER XXIII

DONKEYS AND OTHER THINGS

IT was on their way home from lunch, and beside the church, that Sambo chose to make great outcry, being, it appeared, overcome by some secret and terrible sorrow. Ganpa and Sir Algernon had gone on ahead with Nesta, so there were only Chris and Andy and Mamie with the children. Chris, who had a horror, so he said, of publicity, lifted Reggie off Sambo's back, and carried him off towards the line of chairs standing at the church door. Reggie had an arm round his neck, and was looking over his broad shoulder at Mamie and Andy patting Sambo compassionately, while Dearlove was indignantly remonstrating, for it was Sambo's habit, when he wished to mourn aloud, either to bolt, galloping wildly, or stand stock still, and be moved for no man's entreaty, and by no woman's wile.

The two faces were on a level—the man's and the little boy's—and when Chris turned round,

with an amused laugh, he came face to face with a splendidly attired gentleman, every line of whom reeked of the sea, and a pretty little lady clad in white, who blushed and trembled under his recognition.

The sea-faring gentleman put up his right hand, with the palm turned outwards, to his hat brim, and remained under the church porch, motionless ; the little lady trembled and blushed again, with a wondering side glance at her new husband.

" Well ! " exclaimed Chris softly, looking from one side to the other in amazement, " if it isn't Guernsey Peter ! "

" Guernsey Peter it is, sir," returned Jem Haynes, with a big laugh of childlike delight. He turned to his wife : " That's the name they give me on my ship, Ellen," he exclaimed. " As these yere gentleman says. An' how's the world treatin' you, sir ? "

He gave Chris no time to answer, but, drawing Ellen forward by the little white-gloved hand, introduced her.

" Mrs. Haynes, sir ; just spliced this very minute."

Chris beamed down on her shy, happy glances.

" And so my old friend is your Jem," he said quizzically. " Funny world we live in now, isn't it, Mrs. Haynes ? I remember when I was his

devoted admirer ; and am so still indeed. I look back upon his horsesteak grills with passionate regret ; I get nothing nowadays so good."

Jem slapped his new leg, and laughed boisterously. " I'll be boun' as you never gets anythink you're half so ready for, sir," he asserted gleefully. " Jimmey ! that was the time."

" It was," agreed Chris emphatically.

Jem became suddenly very sober, and cast a queer look around him, at the sunny steps, the quaint little old shops across from him, and the crowds of little folk hastening home to lunch.

" This is a bit better sir," he said quietly, with a reminiscent thankfulness.

" Rather," agreed Chris, emphatically.

Jem's brown features suddenly flamed into a fervour of gratitude.

" But for you, sir," he said, " I'd never 'a seen this day." He pointed a fore-finger at his bride, who paled and shrank before it. " She'd 'a bin breakin' her 'eart for me a-lyin' below Gun Hill," he said tragically, " if it hadn't bin for you, bless you in yer ways, sir."

The two men looked at each other for a brief silence, Reggie glancing from one to the other, his thin little face glowing with some glory of delight from within.

Then Chris laughed, and calling a chair, put the

little lad into it, and turning about, shook hands with the bride and groom.

"Joy to you both, and happiness, long life and good luck! Jem, I'll come an' see you an' we'll talk of old times, when we were companions in misery, and arms. Good-bye!"

He opened the door of the carriage that stood at the porch waiting for the newly married couple, and banged it after them with a bow, hat in hand. The driver whipped up, and they were whirled round the church and away into the sunshine.

"So my old friend is Dearlove's Sea-Person," he remarked laughingly to Reggie, as he filled up his pipe before starting up the hill towards home. "Rum she should buy him a new leg, Reggie, for I fear it was owing in part to me that he lost the old one."

Reggie lifted a pair of adoring eyes to him, a little brilliant patch showing in each thin cheek.

"Chris," he began, leaning forward with his hands over one another on the chair apron.

"When Jem's leg was shot away at Gun Hill, an officer carried him in on his back. He has told me about it hundreds of times. He loved that officer, and I know his name; it is——"

Chris took his pipe out of his mouth and held up a warning finger. "Hush!" he cried, "here's Dearlove. Remember my age, Reggie, or she

will be down on us like a hundredweight of bricks. Hallo, young lady ! ”

Dearlove fell upon them from behind, panting with excitement.

“ I say,” she puffed, “ do catch up to Ganpa an’ the little dry old Judge. Make your old pony run, man, will you ? ”

“ Surelee, missee,” agreed the chairman, and they went off up the hill at great pace, calling on Ganpa loudly, till he came to a halt with his old friend against the prison wall.

“ Let’s all go home together,” panted Dearlove, hanging on to Ganpa, while the pony breathed loudly, head down, as he resumed a more reasonable pace. “ It’s far more sociabler.”

“ So it is,” agreed Ganpa. “ Pray where are Mamie and Andrew Kerr ? ”

“ Down there,” replied Dearlove, with a backward jerk of her brown head, “ Sambo, you know, was crying—hee-hawing—then he sat down, an’ no matter what I said to him, he simply wouldn’t get up. So I thought I’d come on, for I was so annoyed with him.”

Sir Algernon looked at her past Ganpa’s shoulder, and gave a dry little chuckle.

“ Annoyed with him ! ” he exclaimed softly ; “ annoyed with a donkey. Ha ! ha ! ”

“ Donkeys,” said Dearlove, still panting a little,

as they went on abreast of the chair so that Reggie should share in the conversation, "donkeys are most 'speratin'—I don't think any other animal is so 'speratin'—the more you give them peppermint creams an' currant buns, the more sadder they seem to get. Donkeys have a cross on their back because Our Blessed Lord rode on them, an' somebody told me once that is why they are so meelcholy. I think they ought to be frightfully proud—an' I really think they are, only they pretend to be meek, so's they'll get things, an' make you sorry for them. It isn't very charitable to eat all your bull's-eyes, an' then scrangle you off under a mulberry tree, or to kick out at you when you're combin' out their tail, even if it is a sort of Persian tail. An' I think it's proud to 'xpect people to pick up things you've taken a bite out of, when you could quite easily pick it up yourself. Paddy told me that donkeys like thistles, so I went an' simply gathered every one I could find, an' Sambo only kicked, then he cried. I don't know why, when you do every sort of thing for them, they should cry; or sit down in the road, or roll over when you're wantin' to ride. Sambo's frightfully vain too, an' if you put a yellow rose in him he won't budge, but if you give him a pink one, he looks at himself in the shop windows."

"We all have our weaknesses," sighed Chris.

"Well, he's a doaty, anyway," concluded Dearlove, hanging on to Ganpa's arm. "I love him."

"He's a very nice little beast," agreed Chris, with a critical whiff. "I wish I had known him years ago; he would have been excellent stuffed with onions and breadcrumbs, and served with white sauce."

"Ha! ha!" chuckled Sir Algernon helplessly. "Donkey!"

Dearlove raised a pair of horrified eyes to Chris, and then glanced in a stricken sort of way at Reggie.

"Oh, Reggie!" she breathed.

"They were starving, Dearlove," said Reggie, with a quick indrawing of his breath. "Think of it! and they ate mules and horses."

She flew at Chris, and catching his big right hand, opened it and kissed the palm, closing the brown fingers over it, as if to keep the caress from flying away.

"Oh, Chris!" she said earnestly, "my ducky-dear! I do remember Nesta an' me used to make a Novena—every, every time."

"What's a Novena?" questioned Reggie, curiously.

"It's a nine days prayer—every day for the same thing," explained Dearlove. Then suddenly

she gave a little shriek, and came to a dead stop on the pavement.

The pony stopped too, and the whole party stood gazing at her, wondering what might be the matter.

Sir Algernon was particularly interested, for this was the first little girl he had ever come in contact with since he was a little boy of nine, and he was in a divided mind as to whether she were an angel or a witch. The next few minutes left him more hopelessly young and bewildered than he had ever been in his life.

Dearlove all at once assumed an aspect of the most profound and lovely piety. Her face was like the face of some listening visitant from heavenly regions, far away beyond the ken of man. Her long eyes closed, till the lashes, black and long, hung on her smooth cheeks like veils. She lifted her head slightly, and her length of swimming gleaming hair hung round her like a penumbra of golden brown.

"Oh, Blessed Lord," said Dearlove, in a honey sweet small voice, softly confidential, "Don't think, because I jumped over the little Judge's hat, that I will let you forget about Reggie. Please let him be with us always, because I love him an' so do all the rest of us."

Two long slits of absolute amethyst appeared

between the black veils, and were suddenly covered over again. "Dear Little Lord," she resumed coaxingly, "if you could possibly manage it this week. Amen."

She opened her eyes, and almost in the same breath, but with a business-like air and manner, "I say," she concluded, "I may's well get in with Reggie, mayn't I?"

Chris, with his teeth on his under lip, signed to the amazed driver to open the door, and she hopped quickly in, and settled herself beside Reggie, spreading out her skirt so that her pocket was handy.

In it she sought for an agonized moment, and brought out a large bulls'-eye, which she bit carefully into four pieces, and held out towards Sir Algernon.

"Have a bit to suck," she invited; "it keeps you from sinking into the hole inside you."

"I—er—I——" said Sir Algernon confusedly; "but where's your own?"

"Oh," she sighed resignedly, "I'm not having any—for a mortification. Do take it."

With a hopelessly bewildered expression, Sir Algernon took the piece of bull's-eye, and automatically conveyed it to his mouth.

Ganpa was shaking on his feet, as he took his share, and Chris, smoking hard as a mill chimney,

dropped his surreptitiously into his pocket, with an imploring wink at Reggie, who sat regarding Dearlove with an expression of sheer mystification and surprise.

"It's an awful temptation," she soliloquized in a kind of impersonal way, "when you're biting bull's-eyes, to chew up the biggest bit ; but when I do it, I nearly always lose a penny, or there isn't a second helpin' of somethin' I like."

"Honesty," remarked Ganpa sententiously, "is the best policy, especially when dealing with yourself, Dearlove."

"But I think I'd chew up the biggest bit all the same," chuckled Sir Algernon.

"Amherst, I haven't tasted bull's-eyes since I was fifteen. I'd no idea they were so good. I hope you're going to give me a decent lunch."

"Fair," promised Ganpa, laughingly, "fair, Algy. Nesta remembered my saying you once had a weakness for raspberry tart."

"A-a-h," breathed Sir Algernon, "what a good thing it is to be eleven, and to have the prospect of raspberry tart—young—I—I mean—er—Dearlove, are you fond of raspberry tart?"

"Yes," replied Dearlove calmly. "I always pray for it weeks before the holidays."

"And—and," faltered the astounded Sir Algernon, "do you er—er—get it?"

She turned and faced him with an air of mild curiosity.

"Course I do," she said ; " what 'd be the use of askin' things, if I didn't get them ? "

" Naturally, naturally," agreed Sir Algernon in haste, and they followed Chris and Ganpa up the steps, while the chair-man, forgetting his liberal fare, stood in the white roadway below the garden steps gazing up at them in absolute perplexity and amusement.

CHAPTER XXIV

JEM HAYNES' CONCLUSION

IT'S what I'm feared av," shuddered Mary Bawn, "is herself orderin' us to bring him back. You know I'm thinkin', Patrick, that whiles she didn't want him herself, her wan wish was that nobody ilse would be knowin' him, or about him. Do ye mind now, how she does always be askin' where he's bin, an' what people he will be talkin' to? 'Tis quare now that she would be wishful to keep him unbeknownst like. An', Patrick, I'm feared av her; the quate coldness av her would terrify the sun out av the sky."

She sat motionless, as if contemplating that unpleasant vision.

"Herself will be mad—mad," she concluded apprehensively. "What then, Patrick?"

"Faith," said Paddy bitterly, "she will that, an' all hell won't hold her at that tide. But we'll take it stannin', Mary, or sittin' down to thole, but we won't be bringin' Master Reggie back. I've the right to let him go."

“ ‘Tis like enough,” quavered Mary, “ that she will be castin’ doubts, thinkin’ the folks beyant at the Turret House will be lavin’ a han’ to help her ag’in Master Reggie. An’ while all’s said an’ done she cares nothin’ but to be shut av him.”

Mary Bawn bent her head over her work, and pondered deeply over the complication that had just arisen—an utterly unforeseen happening. Reggie’s mother was coming to see him again. Mary could not remember that she had ever come twice in the same year, since she had first been given charge of Paddy’s little ward.

She was cutting up vegetable marrow for jam. Mary’s marrow jam was quite famous in the regiment. On one side of her was a heap of golden marrows, on the other a large ochre coloured basin, into which she swept the little thick cubes of gleaming pulp ; there were lemons before her on the snowy white board, and a big bowl of white pinks stood in the middle of the immaculately white table.

Nesta always said that Mary’s kitchen was a picture, and at this moment Mamie would have liked to make a picture of it, with Mary in her dark blue cotton, and her lovely white hair, sitting with the knife hilt pressed on the table in her clenched hand, and her firm lips set hard, thinking, thinking.

At last she looked up "Patrick," she said with great emphasis, "'tis the tall fair lady we will be settin' on herself whin she comes. Luk at now ; she is bent on havin' Master Reggie."

"They're all bent on him, Mary woman. If ye on'y saw him amongst thim, ye might say he was the same blood. Ye could now : the big Colonel carryin' him as if he was Beeleek, an' the gran' ould gran'father readin' to him, an' talkin' to him, an' the ladies. But the little young lady bates all. To hear the pair av thim. Sure there's nothin' at all in the world they wouldn't be doin' for her, an' she just loves him."

"She does so," agreed Mary quietly, "an' Patrick, did ye see the room they've put him in ? didn't I go to pick aff the apple-blossoms aff the gran' satin bed-cover. Like the inside av a green shell it is, that room, an' the big pictur av Our Lady with Our Lord in her arms, smilin' down on his bed. Glory be ! Himself will be that happy now."

"He is that," pronounced Paddy briefly. "Mary, I'm thinkin' if we can evade Herself."

He broke off abruptly and looked down.

Mary crossed herself swiftly. "In a good hour be it spoken," she said, and resumed her cutting, glancing now and again at a long lilac-tinted card, whose faint perfume reached above

the white pinks, as it stood propped against the bowl that held them.

There was on that card a brief and haughty message : " The Marchesa di Farnisi will call at 4.30 on Wednesday."

Mary settled her spectacles on her nose, and chopped with untiring energy, the words careering in a never-ending circle through her brain. Paddy extended his feet before him, as if meditating on their generous proportions, and sat with his chin on his chest ; he too was anticipating a bad quarter of an hour with Reggie's haughty mother.

The sunlight danced and quivered across the little square red tiles of the kitchen floor, and glittered and glistened on Mary's brass chimney ornaments, her delph dogs and little doll-houses, and the pink china that had been the glory of her mother's Irish home. The wind came in at the open door, heavy with the scent of the Guernsey carnations—the pinks, and roses and southernwood, of her garden—And blew out again through the open window, fluttering the muslin blinds, making a little quiet song as if to fill up the void left by the little childish soul who was not there, and whose absence made Mary feel life a very heavy matter

The sun turned the marrow rinds to absolute gold without alloy ; it lit up Mary's hair into

white flame about her head, and sought for the colour of her downcast eyes. The only sound in the little pretty house was the chop, chop of the knife on the board, and the sweep of the marrow cubes into the yellow basin.

Paddy was intent on his favourite problem ; it was a problem he was always on the point of solving, so that its apparent easiness led him on and on, to more hopeless bewilderment.

"Where was it he had met with the Quality up at the Turret House. Who were they like ? " He knew he had : he must have met them somewhere, and they had been kind to him then, as they were now.

"They will be for goin' back to London on Saturday." Mary dropped the remark into the pleasant silence in a purely impersonal manner, as if on the whole it was no concern of hers : the result of the ache tugging at her heart-strings and the fear in her mind.

"Av course," she went on absently, "we might be bringin' him back here, Patrick, till Herself will be gone."

"An' that's what I will not do," flashed Paddy instantly, awaking out of his dream. "What I do ahint her, I'll be doin' to her face. Nor I won't be lettin' her take him away either. He's happy—lave him be so."

There followed a little sun-filled drowsy silence, broken suddenly by the sharp clang of the green painted garden gate, and the sound of footsteps on the path.

Mary sprang to her feet excitedly, her face unusually white, and fear in her eyes.

"Lord save us!" she exclaimed apprehensively, "who is it at all?"

Paddy had come to his feet with such suddenness that the wooden chair he sat on was overthrown; he stooped to pick it up with a shame-faced laugh.

"'Tis Jem an' Ellen," he said, walking to the porch with a grin of welcome. "How's all?"

They shook hands and came in—a fine handsome pair, as Mary concluded—Ellen very prim and neat in her new blue dress and trim sailor hat, Jem oozing contentment. They were painfully and obviously happy. Paddy thought of Highland Barbara, with her rough pretty hair and hazel eyes, and somehow resented it.

"Master Reggie with his friends up at the Turret House?" inquired Ellen, with a glance round.

Mary Bawn nodded as she reached out her pink tea things—a visit like this was something in the nature of an occasion—it required the use of her best; she would give the bride and groom tea out of her mother's china.

Jem scrutinized Paddy with distinct disapproval. Paddy looked worried and downcast, and Jem in his turn resented that. How could any man be downcast while he was so happy?

"Wot's up?" he asked gruffly. "Git it off yer chest, man."

"'Tis Master Reggie's mother, Jem," explained Mary gloomily. "Ye know we don't be prayin' for her visits, an' she's bin wanst this year—only five weeks gone—now she's here again. We're feared, ye see, she'll be takin' him away from his friends."

"Am't Paddy his gyardian?" catechized Jem abruptly; "if he is she can't hinterfere no ways. Care killed a cat. Cheer up, matey. Wot's 'er name?"

"Oh, some tan-fiddilin' Ayetalian," gloomed Paddy—"Farnisi."

"Ho!" observed Jem with considerable surprise. "Rum name for an English hoffer; you were a-sayin' to me the little gentlemun's father was an officer?"

"I didn't say it was *his* name, did I?" asked Paddy caustically. "Hers."

"Oh, 'ers," repeated Jem amiably. "Look 'ere, wye don't you find the little man's people? they'll settle with Mrs. Farnisi. A woman mus' be a pretty bad lot when her 'usban' takes away

the gyardianship of her own child from 'er. You git 'im among his own ; they'll tackle 'er all right."

Paddy smiled gloomily, being possessed of an intuitive knowledge that, whoever Reggie's people might be, they would find the lady a difficult handful to tackle.

" I can't find 'em," he said quietly, " becas my Cap'en wint out afore he'd put their names down. Ye can't remimber much with a hole through yer head, Jem."

" No more ye can, matey," agreed Jem. " Still, there's ways of findin' things out. The father's name now, what was that ? "

Paddy seemed horribly embarrassed ; he shot his feet out before him and groaned, drew them in again and scowled ; then, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, began to march up and down the little kitchen, to the imminent danger of its ceiling.

" Jem," he began desperately, coming suddenly to a halt before his friend, " I onst gave a promise I'd niver be mentionin' the name to ever a wan at all ; but like enough he niver mint it for more nor the time he wint away. There's no need to be gobbin' and blatherin' about why ; but anyways he had to lave his regiment, an' he tould me I was niver to say his name to a sowl. I haven't,

but I'm thinkin' I'd need to, or Master Reggie 'll suffer. I'd better be tellin' the name."

"I should say, Mr. Quin," struck in Ellen, in her prim, lady-like little voice, "that you would find perhaps the ladies would know it; and that would be a great help, wouldn't it, if you need to find Master Reggie's family?"

"There's hardly a name in the two Services but I'll know somethin' about it," added Jem importantly. "Tell me 'is name, an' I'll put you on 'is people; that's straight."

"'Tis a quare ould name," said Paddy reluctantly. "Amherst."

Ellen gave a shrill little scream, and Mary turned, teapot in hand, to look in amazement at Jem Haynes. He had risen slowly; his fine new leg had knee hinges, but it worked reluctantly as yet, and he was leaning forward the while, hammering one clenched hand into the palm of the other, his face one wide laugh, and all the veins in his forehead knotted into blue prominence with excitement.

"Wot did I say?" he bellowed? "Wot did I say? Cheek by jowl an' the two of them the dead spit of each other. Didn't I ought to know it, seein' him night and day, with the jaw of him along the gun till I got to know it like me own; one's grey granite for hardness, and the other just chaney

that the sun might shine through ; but, Lord ! Lord ! there ye are, line for line, the dead spit of each other."

And he ceased thumping his hand, to give one concluding thump to the table, that made everything on it jump and rattle.

"Whin ye've quite done with the furnchure," remarked Paddy kindly, "mabby ye'll ixplain."

Jem had slowly and carefully re-seated himself. He stretched out a hand, waved it magnificently, and beckoned Paddy towards him.

"'Ere," he said, "come 'ere."

Paddy came, and stood with his back against the table, regarding him with a whimsical toleration.

"That lill lad," said Jem with long pauses between each word to give his statement full importance, "is Hamherst. Wot's the name of that fine big soldier-gentlemun that carries 'im about ?"

"In-ver-rona," replied Paddy, emphasizing each syllable.

"In-ver-ona," echoed Jem satirically, "hof course ! An' wot's the name of the old gentlemun with the wite 'air. The father ?"

Paddy opened his mouth to reply, and shut it again quickly with an expression of sheer surprise. He had suddenly remembered the inex-

plicable fact that he had never heard the old gentleman's name. Barbara and her fellow servants had always alluded to him as "M' Lord," just as she referred to the ladies severally, as "M'Lady." Paddy had concluded, without thought, that it might be the common form of address in the Highlands, but he had never considered the matter.

"Well now," he said in puzzled tone, "I niver heard it."

"Well, I have," Jem informed him with stately dignity, "an' I'm tellin' yer straight—Hamherst. The Hearl of Hamherst—an' Colonel Christopher Hamherst—Lord Inverona his son—thick we were at Ladysmith, as potatoes in lobscouse. The best man, the best hofficer, that ever stepped in shoe-leather; he saved what's left of me. I ought to know 'im, for he 'elped nurse me in 'orspital. T'other day, when Ellen an' me's comin' out after bein' spliced, wot do I see? The Colonel an' your little man in his arms, their faces close together, an' line for line, they are the image of the other—cheek an' nose an' chin. The name's the same; they've taken to 'im as if they knew. Take yer papers to the Hearl, me boy, an' harsk 'im 'oo your cap'en was; 'e'll tell you."

There was a wondering pause, and into it

burst Mary Bawn, weeping like a woman demented.

She laid hold of her brother's arm, and shook him wildly.

"The Blessed Saints have heard me!" she cried, while the tears poured down her white cheeks. "He's lost to me for iver, but it's happy enough he'll be with his own. Go, Patrick, wid the papers. Sure, God has brought the darlin' straight to his own."

And straightway into Paddy's mind leaped the solution of his haunting problem, at last. Lord Inverona was like his beloved captain. The old gentleman was like him. They were all like him in greater or lesser degree.

"Well now," said Paddy, looking round him like a man in a dream, "if this doesn't bate cock-fightin', I'd like to know what does."

CHAPTER XXV

THE END OF GANPA'S QUEST

"**B**EGGIN' your honour's pardon, but might I be makin' so free as to ax if this letter would be for you?"

There was no superscription on the long envelope, worn at the edges by its contents, yellowed by a tropic sun, and stained in one corner by contact with something within. Ganpa was conscious of a strange chill in the golden air as he turned it over in his thin aristocratic fingers.

"It is not addressed to me, Paddy," he observed at length, with an upward glance at the tall corporal.

"No, sir," agreed Paddy doggedly, "but I'm thinkin' mabby it's for you, for all that."

"Who gave it to you?" inquired Ganpa, a little troubled in his heart, and not knowing why.

He turned over the envelope again—that stain was curiously suggestive—and all at once he had a shuddering horror of it and what it contained.

"Who gave it to you, Patrick?" he repeated quickly, "tell me."

Paddy's face was pale, and his mouth twitched : if this was a mistake of Jem's, there would be no sun in Master Reggie's sky for many a day, if ever it shone again for him at all.

"Sir," he replied steadily, bending forward a little, with his flat cap pressed against his broad chest, and speaking very slowly and distinctly. "'Twas give me by my old cap'en—Cap'en Amherst, sir—the night he died."

All the sunshine seemed to collect in a great golden coloured cloud, and come crashing into the pretty quiet room, where Ganpa sat before his writing table. He sat and gazed at the stained envelope with brilliant eyes, frozen into a silence like death itself. Paddy dared not take his eyes off him, lest in so doing he might extinguish the flickering lights that meant life.

The sound of Dearlove's voice came in through the open windows with the fragrance of the flowers, and little odd snatches of conversation in which the voices of Andy and Chris and Nesta, blended together into a harmonious whole—the tag end of the sailor's shanty, with the clank of the running windlass, and the rattle of the chain.

Slowly Ganpa's long fingers opened the envelope and drew out its contents one by one. A letter, without beginning, without end—the writer had been in great haste and had gone before he could

finish his say. Where the signature should have been was the brown stain—and the inky track of a pen that had fallen from a nerveless grasp.

Ganpa's white hair lifted softly, and fell in the warm breeze—the voices went on—Dearlove was reading a fairy tale to Reggie on the lawn—there was soft laughter—and the sea-noises and the sea-voices, but in the little room where Ganpa sat, with Paddy facing him, there seemed suddenly to be the silence and the chill of the grave. Ganpa read on and on, over and over again, trying to realize that it was this thing he had fought off and rejected for so long—Drogo was dead—dead.

He laid aside the letter and opened the other papers : the marriage certificate of Marie Angelo-Emilia, Marchese Di Farnisi and Drogo Reginald Beaumont Amherst. A copy of the baptismal register of their son, Reginald Beaumont Amherst ; the date was thirteen years past. Ganpa sat looking at it with eyes that were blind and saw nothing, and he told himself over and over again that he had always thought it—Reggie, his little grandson, Drogo's child, must be at least two years older than Dearlove.

"Why ?" he asked in a strained little accent, 'did he leave her. He says he left her—that the boy must not get into her hands. Why ?"

"Sir," began Paddy moistening his dry lips,

and shifting from one foot to the other, "I was his servant in the ould regiment; he trusted me, sir, an' he made me a friend. I was the witness, as ye will observe, when he married her. Sir, she scalded the sowl in him. He niver tasted peace from the hour they left the church. She was a madwoman—no! nor that either—but a woman without a heart—an' she tuk the heart out av him. She followed him to India, an' the time he went on leave was after Master Reggie was born. He was but six weeks in the worrld, sir, I was with him that time too—an' if she was bad afore, then what was she after? Only the Cap'en knows, sir, or what he stud, but times I would be wonderin' that the bitterness av the things she said to him didn't scald the skin aff her tongue. The Cap'en was very patient, an slow, as ye will be knowin' well. He was always for makin' her love the child, an' she hated the sight av it. She wouldn't luk at it. Sure the ayah must 'a thought her the quare lady—an' one day he carried it in, an' hopin' she would take to it, mabby, he left it on the pillow in the bed beside her. I was in his dressin room, sir, clavin' his spurs, an' I could see a bit in the room just along the side av the bed. The ayah was in there too, makin' somethin' for the baby.

"Well, it began to cry—an' I might say the cry

was more like the cheep av a wee bird than a young child, for Master Reggie was but a wake little thing an' like the driven snow for whiteness, but sure ye couldn't help lovin' the little crature the way he would luk at ye wid the big eyes av him. The ayah couldn't lave the pan she was stirrin' an' the spirit stove, an' the child goes on cryin', an' suddenly widout a note av warnin' I see a soort av white flash aff the bed an' a little soft thump an the floor, an' the baby gives wan call that fair froze the marrow in me backbone. She—Well, ye'll be guessin', sir, what she done. The ayah run in and tuk the baby up cryin' an' callin' for the master an' the doctor.

"He came along then, sir, an' I heard him go in after seein' the child an' shut the door. Whin he came out again I hardly knowed him.

"That night, sir, I tuk out two passages for Aden—the ship was sailin' on the morn. From that day out I niver laid eyes on him, nor Master Reggie, till South Africa, an' it was the worst av the fightin' an Spion Kop, a man in the Cape Mounted Rifles turned to me—an' 'twas the Cap'en. We lay there the three nights, side be side, till he got a bullet in him, an' thin we got shelter, an' all might 'a bin well, for we got him down whin we fell back—but it wasn't to be. He *would* walk, an' he got a Mauser through the

forehead. He died in hospital, an' his last words were about Master Reggie an' you, sir.

"After that there was a big Australian officer-man, that was a friend of his, an' he told me Master Reggie was down beyant wid the ayah, an' got lave to go down wid me. He had the good heart in him that gentleman, sir; he paid Master Reggie's passage home an' the ayah's to Calcutta. An' the Colonel, whin I explained to him, paid Mary's wid them an' she came here wid Master Reggie thinkin' 'twould make his back strong. An' 'twas here Herself found thim out again, an' tried to get the little master away, but Mary hild him, an whin I came home, sir, I exchanged to be near him an' Mary."

Ganpa rose, and taking Paddy's right hand in his own put the other on his broad chest and looked at him with dim eyes.

"Patrick Quin," he said brokenly. "My son, my dear son, calls you in this last letter he ever wrote, his friend. He remembered you, and so shall I all my life, and so will the little boy you have been so good to. Take an old man's thanks and his friendship, Patrick. I am proud to call you friend—you are a good man."

"An' if I am, sir," replied Paddy tremblingly, "'tis your son I have to thank for it. I was drinkin' mesilf into the grave whin he came acrost

me, breaking me mother's heart an' me father's."

He saluted grimly and turned to go. Ganpa went with him and opened the door, standing again to shake hands with him.

"Good-bye, Paddy," he said tremulously. "You have ended my quest and we have found something very precious."

Reggie's voice came to him as he stood on the threshold after Paddy's departure. A gay, happy little sound, with an undertone in it that was sadder than any weeping, the echo of past pain, past loneliness, vanished longing.

"Drogo's son," murmured Ganpa under his breath. "I might have known it."

He went into the room and shut the door. "*I did know it*," he protested to himself sorrowfully "for in him I have felt Drogo near."

He sat down and bent his white head over the stained and discoloured letter. For thirteen years he had sought, and now he need seek no more, for the quest was ended. A strange peace fell upon him after the agony of the last half hour. He went down upon his knees, his forehead against that tragic tattered piece of paper, whereon his favourite son's last request had been written at the hour of death.

"May he rest in peace," prayed Ganpa, and was silent there and motionless for a long time,

with the scented wind coming in full of young laughter and the music of the day. Then at length he rose, and putting the papers away went out into the sun and sat down between the two children he loved so well.

CHAPTER XXVI

REGGIE'S MOTHER

SHE came early in the afternoon, when they were sitting in the sunny drawing-room. But she did not come in there, she was shown into Ganpa's study, and spent with him just about a quarter of an hour. The worst quarter of an hour Marie Farnisi had ever known. Ganpa, whose heart was so soft towards little children, who would melt at the most specious tale of want—who was as easily touched as a sentimental woman, was as hard towards the brilliant, scornful imperial woman who had married and marred his younger son, as adamant.

She could do nothing with him, and the fact of her marriage—that marriage she so longed to consign to oblivion, the oblivion of semi-royalty, and a title and condition that was completely satisfactory to her—was soon to be published abroad for all to know, and all to read. Ganpa failed completely to understand why his grandson

should be robbed of his ancient and honourable name, and could not see her reasons for keeping her marriage secret—nor yet why she should have so sought to conceal that marriage. Her beauty went for nothing with him, her charm, her air, her magnificence—but had she known it, Ganpa was realizing all the while she was with him the full extent of Drogo's suffering with this woman who had been his wife. Feeling the splendour of her loveliness, and the potency of the atmosphere that surrounded her, an atmosphere electric with unrest and striving. Yet withal recognizing fully that she was still the great lady—the Marchesa Di Farnisi, and perhaps that that was the worst of her, for with the name she had inherited an inability to be other than what she was.

At the end of their interview he opened the drawing-room door, and ushered her in—she wished to bid her little son farewell.

“Nesta,” said Ganpa sternly, “Mamie—this is Reggie's mother.”

Reggie was sitting at Nesta's side, while she played one of Chopin's waltzes—when Nesta played the piano sang, it was singing now, and Reggie sat with his little thin face aglow with ecstasy, for it was the west wind singing to him in that wonder song—the West Wind singing through wet apple-blossom over a wide tossing sea.

Mamie was sitting at a little table with her colour-box before her, eagerly, swiftly transferring that rapt face, that heavenly expression, to paper, hastening as she had never done before, lest she should miss showing how like to the angels a mortal face can be.

Chris and Dearlove were having an improvised drama with paper dolls—through the music, sweet as it, and as low, threaded in and out the sound of Dearlove's voice as she gave speech to her puppets.

And it was on this the door opened to admit imperial majesty in the shape of Reggie's mother. She was dressed in some soft cloudy silken stuff, that fell around her tall figure like drifts of dun smoke. A big hat shaded the vivid beauty of her cheeks, the sombre glory of her splendid eyes; a great opal flamed and burned upon her breast, and her bare hands, exquisitely long and soft, were covered with a blaze of rings.

Nesta's heart flew to her white throat in indignation as she remembered Reggie's clothes; the flounce that rolled around his mother's elegant feet could have dressed fifty men for a year.

The Marchese di Farnisi glanced round them with an air of supercilious far-off courtesy—including them collectively in a careless bow that was the quintessence of well-bred insolence.

Then she sank into the chair Ganpa placed for her, her dun coloured chifbons billowing cloud-like around her feet.

Reggie's eyes had opened on her entrance with a kind of fearful anticipation. He seemed to struggle out of a dream of joy, to an awakening of horror; he sat gazing till she spoke, ignoring the presence of all save her son.

"So, Reggie," she said in a curiously liquid voice, a voice that carried every emotion and yet left no remembrance behind. "You have found your father's people. You are more fortunate than your mother. Suppose I ask you to choose between us. After all I am your mother."

Reggie stumbled painfully to his feet, hanging for one doubting instant on Nesta's hand. His little face twisted with agony. He stooped forward, accentuating acutely that burden on his little wasted figure. Nesta, who did not know her or her history, instinctively divined the innate cruelty in this woman, and set her teeth on her under lip to keep back the words that rushed for utterance.

"I see you hardly realize what I say," went on the Marchesa. "Your grandfather has been impressing it upon me, Reggie, that I am hardly, from his point of view, a desirable mother. Come, let us put it to the proof. Will you desert me,

whom he repudiates, or remain with him, and never see me again ? Choose. I am your mother."

She was in a cold fury. Those who knew her well cowered before this mood when it came, knowing her capable of any cruelty, any lengths, while it lasted. That strange subtle inhumanity in her, which delighted so in making others suffer, and in witnessing their agonies, might have been handed down to her from those ancestors of hers who found the Borgias congenial company, and who impaled their servants for amusement.

For a moment Reggie stood grasping at Nesta's soft hand, wildly calling within himself for rescue, safety. Then he drew a trembling little hand across his eyes, and stepped across to where his mother sat.

He stood before her, shrinking and small, while they watched him, all the sweet, kind, splendid people whom he had just found out were his own, and whom he loved with all the passion of his little soul.

He looked round at them severally, with pallid face and dull eyes. In that glance was bitter renunciation—utter despair.

"You choose to come with me ?" questioned the liquid cruel voice.

"Yes, mother," he said dully.

"You do not seem overjoyed," she mocked,

"yet you were happy enough when I came in. You went to those people quickly enough, Reggie. Why did you never come to me?"

"I did not know," he replied, "that you wanted me."

She pushed him softly backwards. "You were quite right," she said with an echo of triumph. "I *never* wanted you, Reggie—I do not want you now."

He stumbled slightly away from her, then stood still, a figure so forlorn, so appealing and desolate, that it might have melted a heart of stone to see. The pain, the horror of her words held them spell-bound. It was Dearlove who broke through.

Somehow, she was instantly at Reggie's side, even before Nesta could move, and her little bare arms were clasping him tight, her soft cheek pressed against his, while her long brown hair fell over, and hid the marred outline of his wasted little form from his mother's view.

"My dearest, darlin'—my beautiful cousin," she said, rocking slightly to and fro, as she hugged him closely. "Don't mind, my lovely, because you know people say that to Our Blessed Lord—and He loves them just the same."

The Marchesa laughed softly, and Dearlove lifting her eyes, looked full at her.

At first the Marchesa was angry. Her anger

had been ebbing and flowing in her like the unquiet sea, since she entered the room. At that look it suddenly ebbed completely out and left her mind a curious blank.

The look affected her strangely, it reminded her of a boy's voice singing in a great dim cathedral; it had the same passionless purity, the same absolute clearness and limpid sweetness, and the beauty of the face that look came from made her gasp with surprise. And like the eyes, with beauty of a wholly unfamiliar and rare type. With a curious bitter pang, Marie Farnisi suddenly became aware that had this been her child she would have worshipped her.

"Why do you call Reggie beautiful?" she asked, though she was hardly conscious of the question, so great was her surprise.

"Because he is, of course," replied Dearlove gravely. "An' I love him *dearly—dearly*."

The Marchesa lifted her eyebrows into a thin arch above her scornful eyes.

"Then he ought to be happy," she said briefly.

"'Course he is." Dearlove was softly matter of fact. "Till you made him——" She was too well-bred to say 'miserable'.

"I am sorry," regretted the Marchesa languidly. "Will you give me a kiss, and I will promise not to do it any more."

Her voice was like the sound of a bass string on the harp, twanged with a caressing finger.

Dearlove raised her long dark lashes and looked at her again, just the look—no word, then she let her eyes fall on Reggie's head, and looked up again.

A quick tide of dark crimson flew upwards from the Marchesa's chin to the roots of her black hair.

She drew the children nearer, and lifting the brown locks off Reggie's face, kissed him coldly on the thin snowy cheek.

"Reggie," she said, "I wish I had not troubled you. Yet you will forget and be happy. You are happy—and that is something. I have never been happy once, for a single instant, in all my life."

Dearlove shook her head commiseratingly. "'Course not," she remarked. "If you say things like that sort you can't be. But if you're not happy the next best thing is to try and make somebody else happy, then it sort of gets right for yourself."

"I see," murmured the Marchesa slowly, as if she were considering this aspect of the matter, her head sideways, and the fire in her long subtle eyes smouldering under their black lashes fixed on Dearlove's face. "Well, child—I think I

might have tried that plan had I had you instead of Reggie."

Nesta's lips were white with anger, her eyes like blue-green fires in her pale face. When she was moved her soft voice took on an accent of the Gaelic that made it strangely, hauntingly sweet. She spoke in it now, for she was moved to the very soul.

"We have what is best for us," she said with soft scorn. "To my sister, whose life has been patience and sorrow, God sent a spirit of comfort and joy. To you——"

The Marchesa regarded her sidelong fashion, with that air of faint superciliousness that had marked her entry. "And to me?" she said with a laugh, her finger pointing at Reggie's outlines, "something not quite straight—and unwelcome."

"A something sweet, pure and holy—a message to your soul," cried Nesta, her whole being protesting against the needless torment this woman was inflicting on her child.

"Yes," assented the Marchesa—"and to yourself?"

Nesta rose and came swiftly across the room, stopped, and lifting Reggie in her soft arms pressed his little white cheek into her neck, keeping her hand on his head when she faced his tormentor.

"I," she said steadily, "am glad to take to my heart and cherish the child you put away from you. Woman ! *woman dear* ! did your arms never ache for his little body in the night. Did your lips never hunger for him ? Had he been mine, this lovely soul in the ill body, I would have thanked heaven from morning till night as my days dawned. I hope you may never be sick for the want of him, that you may never pine for his love when it is too late."

She paused, and taking a corner of his darned old jacket in her finger and thumb, held it extended for a second dumbly, her blue eyes contrasting it with the other's costly chiffons and costlier jewels.

The Marchesa sprang to her feet with paling cheeks and flaming eyes.

"Open the door !" she commanded imperiously. "If I stay here any longer I shall think I am a monster !"

Ganpa with a courtly bow opened the door wide, and she swept out, leaving behind her a faint inscrutable fragrance, a mysterious whirling of the air, as if Storm itself had come and gone.

Chris wiped his forehead, and spread out his hands mutely.

Ganpa closed the door after his daughter-in-

law, and stood for an instant saying nothing, but looking suddenly old and weary.

There was the sound of wheels down below, at the garden steps.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed fervently.

"I do not think," observed Chris with a whimsical look at his wife, standing with Reggie still pressed close in her arms, "that lady will repeat her visit."

"Thank God!" repeated Ganpa softly.

"Reggie," said Nesta softly, kissing his cheek, "you are my little boy now—mine and Chris's—nobody will ever make you sorry again."

Mamie came over and caressed his limp hand, Dearlove kissed the other—the fear was gone, the trouble had come for the last time, and there was only happiness and peace for the rest of his time.

"Little sweetheart," Mamie cried, "look up."

Nesta turned his head on her shoulder, and cried out in terror.

Reggie had fainted away.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONCLUSION

DEARLOVE had been playing Beggar-my-Neighbour with them on the veranda, and after having cheated them all outrageously, she suddenly arrived at the conclusion that she had "c'mpunchions." Beggar-my-Neighbour, she said, was too much temptation. But while she played it, she cheated with such manifest and whole-hearted enjoyment, that her shameless tactics were the salt of the game. Sir Algernon felt it rather flat after her departure.

She went away down the garden, and returned with a long bamboo rod, that had been propping up a standard—and came up to them waving it as if it were a fairy wand.

She halted beside Ganpa, and watched him : Ganpa cheated so obviously and clumsily that she was quite sorry for him.

"I don't think," she announced all at once, apropos of nothing at all, "that I'll ever go to

hell—an' I don't think I'll have a reely long purgatory either. You see my' 'tentions are so good, an' course it's only people's 'tentions that are counted. My 'tentions are always most good. But the Devil comes an' makes me break my resolutions, an' he makes me enjoy bein' so bad."

She broke off with a little quick scream, spreading out the fingers of her left hand towards them all. "Oh, *my* goodness!" she exclaimed. "I 'most forgot to tell you—I saw the Devil this mornin'."

"Save and deliver us!" cried Mamie in horror-stricken accents. "Where?"

"Don't be 'xcited, dear one," proceeded Dearlove calmly. "He was on the garden steps. You see I took Mary down the steps, an' when I turned I saw sittin' behin' me, a great big dog. Well I knew no dog was in the garden, an' no dog had gone up past me—but I went to pat him. But when I did I saw he was talkin' to himself, an' I knew it was the Devil.

"So I just said to him. 'If you think you can take people for bein' uncharitable, you're mistaken, that's all. It isn't a mortal sin to hate people, 'specially if you can't help it, an' they're horrid people. So you needn't sit there gibberin' an' whisperin', because you're jolly well mistaken

if you think I'm afraid, so now. An' if you'd rather not let me see you go, after bein' so jolly mean, I'll turn my back on you till I count ten'."

"A-h-h-h !" breathed Chris tremulously. "Now that's what I call real handsome, Dearlove. Fetched him, I expect !"

"P'haps," remarked Dearlove pensively, "it was generous. I would have liked to see him go—an' smell the brimstone an' all. But when I turned roun' again, he was just gone, an' no smell of brimstone or anythin'. I think he might have said 'Thank you.'"

"He might," sighed Andy. "'Sharper than the serpent's tooth——'"

"Well," said Dearlove impressively, "I think it was because he was so jolly 'shamed of himself. You know, dears, I am always most sorry for him, because you see he was an angel once, an' God loved him more'n any of all the rest, an' it must be frightfully slack sittin' on people's garden steps an' pretendin' to be a dog, after flyin' gloriously in heaven on great white wings in the music. An' nobody likes the Devil even if they're good an' needn't be afraid. They just run the minute they know it's him, an' he must be lonely sometimes."

"Wash it," groaned Andy—"with water you know !"

Dearlove cast a reproving glance at him, which was altogether wasted, as he was looking not at her, but at Mamie, who was laughing gently and silently, while she stroked Reggie's hand.

"'Nother thing," she resumed, "is that mostly people laugh at him, when they get safe away, an' it must be jolly downfallen to be laughed at when you mean to be fearfully frightenin'. I wish," she sighed wistfully, "he'd find a vocation an' be changed."

"'When the Devil was sick,'" quoted Sir Algernon, "'the Devil a monk would be. When the Devil was better—the devil a monk was he.'"

"Oh, then, he tried it?" questioned Dearlove disappointedly. "I am sorry. If he would only have gone on bein' a monk I would have got all my 'xemptions."

"It does seem a pity," smiled Ganpa gently, "but he is like that."

"Oh, well then," cried Dearlove, with a swift return to cheerfulness. "We can play school. Children sit along the veranda steps, that way. Ganpa, you can sit in your chair."

"Thank you," said Ganpa meekly. "I will."

But Sir Algernon sat down on the other side of

Nesta, and went on talking to her about Ganpa's sister, who had once been a great friend of his, and whom Nesta loved dearly. Andy got beside Mamie ; it was really wonderful how he always managed to get near her, and though he never said anything he seemed remarkably happy. Reggie sat between Mamie and Chris, and fairly beamed like the sun.

And you would hardly have known little Reggie that sunny September morning, he was already so changed. Nesta had dressed him in a loose suit of white serge, and tied a scarlet silk handkerchief beneath his wide collar ; the wide light garments disguised the little burden between his slender shoulders, so that it was hardly noticeable. He looked just like some strange happy spiritual thing, half mortal, half angel, alighted among them to play.

"Now dears," began Dearlove categorically, "this is the first question. If you had to be a colour, what colour would you be ?"

"That," pronounced Sir Algernon, "is, as Euclid remarks, absurd. You couldn't be a colour—come now ?"

"The question is," repeated Dearlove with a severe aspect and haughty tone, "*if* you had to be a colour—*what* colour would you be—Chris ?"

"So long as it was a nice colour," answered Chris, retreating from the rod pointed at his nose, "I wouldn't mind, but I should hate to be one that didn't suit Nesta's complexion."

"Poof!" snubbed his instructress. "Mamie?"

"I would be the colour of Reggie's eyes," replied Mamie instantly.

"And I'd like to be crinkley golden-brown with the sun on it," said Reggie, looking at Dearlove with long dreamy narrowed eyes.

"And I," said Ganpa, "would be a true blue."

"What'll you be, Andy?" inquired the schoolmistress severely.

"I—I," stammered Andy, "I think I'd be a kind of far-away grey blue."

"Well," remarked Dearlove candidly, "I think 'xceptin' Reggie an' Ganpa, you're all rather stupid."

"Hold on!" cried Nesta. "I'd like to be changeable taffetas, then I could be any colour that was fashionable."

"That's rather good," commented Dearlove approvingly, "though of course you couldn't go to school in it."

And then to their consternation and surprise, she suddenly sat down on the grass in front of them, and burying her head in the skirt of her

smart white frock, began to sob bitterly and wofully.

"Oh!" she wailed. "I've just remembered; it's the last day of our dear, darlin' sweet Make-Believe, and I have enjoyed myself so much! I have been so happy."

"Well, of course it had to end you know, Dearlove," consoled Nesta.

"That doesn't make me any happier," wept Dearlove, "an' I know I can never go back to a lot of things. I can never be 'spectful to my parents again. I know I shall be sayin' Mamie, an' Nesta an' Chris just the same—I know I shall."

The little crowd emitted various exclamations of sympathy.

"The more we played make-believe the more I loved it," wept Dearlove inconsolably, "an with two such nices ones just come in!"

"Don't cry, don't cry!" begged Sir Algernon. Taking his watch from his pocket he pressed it distractedly against her pretty ear.

She felt the cold touch, and heard the tick-tick against her head, and came to a pause with a cataract running down each side of her little straight nose, to regard him with unaffected admiration and delight.

"I say," she sobbed, "do you *reely* think I'm a baby?"

He withdrew a little, shamefacedly, while they all laughed, and restored the watch to his waistcoat pocket.

Then Dearlove relapsed into her weeping with fervour, and wept as if the sun had gone out of her sky for ever. "Oh! Oh!" she cried rocking herself to and fro, "my dear beautiful Make-Believe."

"Look here, Ganpa," said Chris desperately, "Are we so jolly anxious to end this Make-Believe! tell me that now?"

"Anxious!" echoed Ganpa. "Why it is the joy of my life. I couldn't live without it."

"No more could I," declared Andy stoutly. "If this Make-Believe ends I—er—I shall bust." And he looked at Mamie with profound gloom, pulling at his scraggy moustache and frowning horribly.

"As for me," said Sir Algernon, "I came in late—but rather than go back to a lonely middle age, with no excitement but my club, I er—I shall bust too, Dearlove."

"Oh, my goodness!" She peered at them with red eyes, above the hem of her silk smock. "That would be simply awful!"

"So," resumed Chris with a twitch of his lips, "let's keep it up—let's go on make-believing every holidays."

"An' just be the same age as me every time," proposed Dearlove with a huge sniff.

"And be just your age," said Ganpa. "Excepting myself, Dearlove—I think I shall remain twenty-five."

"And we must meet together and make believe till we drop," added Andy with joy.

"We shall be young all our days," said Nesta happily. "Eh Reggie, my sweetheart!"

"Always young," repeated Reggie dreamily, and they all looked at him, and were silent for a little time, while they sat round on the grass.

"Swear it," commanded Dearlove sobbingly.

They took hands around her, and swore solemnly that they would meet every holidays and pretend to be children, and cousins, and be happy together as the day was long. Then she ceased to weep, and putting back her hair began to pick the dandelions from the grass borders and make them into a crown.

They all returned then to the veranda, excepting Reggie, who remained sitting on the sunny lawn, waiting for Dearlove to return to him.

"I say, Amherst," said Sir Algernon tentatively, as they settled themselves in their chairs again. "D'ye think Grizel would have me if I

went up and asked her? I've enough to keep us now."

"Eh?" asked Ganpa in bewilderment at this sudden question. Then it occurred to him that twenty years ago his youngest sister and the struggling barrister, who was now a Supreme Court Judge, had been extremely fond of each other's society.

"And Grizel has not married—though she might have been so—many times."

"I—er—why not ask her?" entreated Ganpa.

"I'm going to," replied Sir Algernon determinedly. "I shall start to-morrow."

"Good luck to you," wished Ganpa. And Sir Algernon smiled boyishly.

Dearlove was singing on the lawn as she threaded the dandelions into a pretty wreath. The tears were hardly dry on her lashes, yet she had forgotten that there were tears in the world, and Reggie looked as if he had forgotten them too, as he sat up against her arm in the sun, with the soft wind blowing seawards over them.

"Oh, happy flowers," sang Dearlove. "Oh, happy, happy day. Oh happy, happy wind that blows away!"

She paused in consternation. "I do believe," she announced dismally, "I'm goin' to be a poet."

He looked round, and bent towards her shyly.

"I—I—I think so am I," he whispered.

"I'd much rather be an engine driver," bemoaned Dearlove, "but I s'pose it can't be helped. I'll just have to get rich an' have a train of my own—then we'll take all the poor school to the country, an' we'll play 'Poor Jinny is a weepin'."

"That would be awfully nice," agreed Reggie thoughtfully.

"The poor school is always prayin' to go to the country," said Dearlove.

He looked up quickly, glanced round again, and drew nearer to her.

"Dearlove," he asked with some embarrassment, "I want to ask you—do you think—do you think it was the Novena, or was——"

"About you, you mean—bein' a cousin?" she interrupted. "'Course it was the Novena. It's reely rather funny you know, when you come to think of it, our pretendin' we were cousins when all the time we were. God does give people su'prises—I shouldn't be su'prised if He sent us a baby next. Once I dreamt I met Our Lord an' I asked Him for one for our family, an' He said to me—'Time enough, child!—time enough.'"

Reggie laid a little transparent hand on hers. "Dearlove," he whispered, "I dreamt about Him too. You know I never dared to ask Him for anything—only that I might be strong, and not cry when you went away——" He stopped and choked a little, even at the echo of that awful thought.

Dearlove put an arm about his shoulders and kissed him between the eyes.

"What did He say to you, Darlin'?" she asked soberly.

"He did not say anything," answered Reggie "because I did not ask Him anything. In my dream we were standing on the shore, and your ship was sailing away with you all in it. And—I had something made of stone where my heart is, Dearlove, and I just looked up at Him, and he lifted me up and I looked over the sea, past where the ship was, to the other side, and there I saw a most beautiful garden, and in the garden you were all waiting for me—though I don't know how you got there, as you ought to have been in the ship. And I thought The Lord went out on the sea, with me in His arms, and put me down in the garden, and when I looked it was Chris had been carrying me, and I was happy again. But you know, Dearlove, the strange thing is, that when Our Lord put me down in

the Garden, he left a flower in my hand, and when I woke up it was sunrise, and all the light was pouring in at my window, and in my hand was a silver flower with a heart of gold, and the scent of it filled all the room. It was no dream, for while I looked at it, it slowly sank into my hand, and nothing but the scent remained. But Dearlove, I saw it, and I know it had been. I saw it with my waking eyes."

Dearlove nodded her brown head emphatically. "'Course," she said. "That was a heavenly flower, an' Our Lord gave it to you, for fear you might be too much tried." She was silent for a moment, then—"Did you tell Nesta?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered happily, "I told her."

"And what did she say?"

"Nothing," replied Reggie faintly, smiling as he spoke, a fugitive dreamy smile, inexpressibly lovely. "She just kissed me, Dearlove."

"Reggie," Dearlove said suddenly, "are you quite, quite happy?"

He looked at her with radiant eyes. "I am so happy," he sighed, "that I couldn't be any happier—not even—if I were straight."

She looked into the pure violet orbs, in a strange breathless silence, then laid her cheek against his own. Even Dearlove could see that

the little cousin's feet were on the threshold of a Kingdom where all are straight and fair and happy, and there are no more partings, or sorrows, or longing, where he might again gather silver flowers with golden hearts, in company with the tender loving Lord.

